Interview with Mr. Thomas B. Reston

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

THOMAS B. RESTON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: June 6, 2005

Q: Today is the 6th of June, D-Day, 2005. This is an interview with Thomas B. Reston, R-E-S-T-O-N and this is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. You go by Tom?

RESTON: Yes, I do, yes.

Q: All right, let's start in the beginning. Could you tell me first when and where you were born?

RESTON: I was born on the 4th of July, 1946 in New York City.

Q: All right. You want to tell me your father is quite well known, but tell me about the Reston side of the family and then we'll do your mother's side just to get a feel for where you all are coming from.

RESTON: My father was an immigrant from Scotland. He was born and raised in Glasgow. My grandfather was a factory worker and they came twice to the United States, once when my father was an infant. They came to Dayton, Ohio, and then they went back to Scotland after about a year in the United States, and they were trapped there by the First World

War. Granddad worked in the munitions factories in Glasgow and then after the War was over, when Britain had an economic collapse, they came back to Dayton, Ohio, when my father was a teenager. My father it was a very strong Calvinist Scottish religious family that he came from. He went to high school in Dayton and then he went to the University of Illinois, Champagne, Urbana. When he got out of college.

Q: That would have been about when?

RESTON: That would have been about 1929 when he got out of college I think, just at the time of the collapse.

Q: You mean the Depression?

RESTON: Yes. He worked for a little, he worked for the Springfield, Ohio paper. He had been a caddy when working his way through high school and got to know James Cox who was the head of the Cox newspapers and he was his caddy. So, Cox got him a job on the Springfield, Ohio paper and then he went to work for the Cincinnati Red Legs as a public relations man because he wanted to try to get out of the Middle West and to New York and try to see whether he could hit the big time.

Q: Cincinnati Red Legs were a baseball team?

RESTON: That's right. He traveled with the team and every time he got to New York he would go around and see if he could find a journalism job in New York, and he did, for the Associated Press. He was a sports writer for the Associated Press, and he was in Britain at the time, writing sports at the time of the beginning of the War.

Q: 1939.

RESTON: Right. He got swept up in the war as a war correspondent for the AP and then the New York Times and came back to Washington after the War and, in the Times bureau in Washington, covered the diplomatic beat. He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1945 for his

coverage of the beginning of the UN (United Nations) and went on to be the head of the Washington bureau of the New York Times and won another Pulitzer Prize in 1956 for his coverage of the '56 elections, the presidential elections. He ultimately went and wrote a column for the New York Times about politics, but a lot of foreign policy in his columns in the Times over many decades and eventually became the executive editor of the New York Times. He ran the whole newspaper in the late 1960s.

Q: We'll come back to some of your experiences, but he was known as, what was his first name?

RESTON: He was James B. Reston, but he went by the name of Scotty because of his Scottish background.

Q: On your mother's side, where did she come from and what do you know about her family background?

RESTON: She came from a small town in Illinois, Sycamore, Illinois, west of Chicago. It's just still a small town of 10,000 people, county seat of DeKalb County, Illinois, about 10,000 people then and now. My grandfather was a lawyer and became a judge and they elect judges in Illinois. It was a staunchly Republican family and my granddad was a Republican and became district court judge and then an appellate judge, traveled the circuit in Illinois as a judge and then he became, he was elected to the Supreme Court of Illinois. He then became chief justice of the Supreme Court of Illinois and sat during the '40s and '50s on the Supreme Court. He also married an old Illinois family into an old Illinois family, the Buseys, his name was Fulton. They were Illinois people, Republicans, very fine people.

Q: Well, then did your mother go to school and how did she meet your father and all that?

RESTON: They met at the University of Illinois and my mother started out also as a writer for magazines and it was a very strong marriage. It was a very peculiar marriage. It was

just a glory to behold. They had one of the most wonderful marriages that I've ever known in my life. They were very close. They went everywhere together and when Dad came to Washington Mother spent most of her middle age years here in Washington.

Q: Well, let's talk about your growing up. In the first place, let's talk a little bit about did you have brothers and sisters?

RESTON: Yes, I've got a couple of brothers, both older than I am and both writers.

Q: What was sort of family life like? Did you sit around the table with your father and he tell you about the days doings and your mother?

RESTON: It very much revolved around the stories that Dad was dealing with in his day to day work. He would come home from the Times bureau rather late and we always waited dinner for him and we would all sit down to the table together virtually every night unless they were going out to diplomatic things or whatever. He would tell about his day's work. He would quiz us on our views about foreign policy and the day's political developments. We were expected to read the papers at breakfast in the morning and so it was a very lively dinner table.

Q: How did you and your brothers, I assume that you tended to take a different course than your father did, didn't they? Being kids you've got to challenge your parents.

RESTON: Somewhat, yes. We all did take a different course from my father, but actually not all that different. My eldest brother became a newspaperman for the San Francisco Chronicle and the Madison Capital Times in Wisconsin and then finally for the Los Angeles Times where he covered the State Department and was the Moscow bureau chief and the London bureau chief for the LA. Times in the 1960s and '70s. Then he ended his career as the editor of a weekly newspaper in Massachusetts on Martha's Vineyard, which is owned by the family. He's just retired from that. My middle brother is a writer of plays and novels

and now popular histories in the last several years. I started out as a newspaperman so we're all somewhat involved with writing.

Q: Did you live in New York and go to school in New York as a kid first before you moved to Washington?

RESTON: I didn't, no, because I was born in New York, but my parents moved to Washington a couple of weeks after I was born.

Q: Where did you live?

RESTON: We lived near the Cathedral in Northwest Washington and I went to public school for 10 years in Washington and the last three years I went to St. Albans School which is a private church school up by the Cathedral.

Q: What about in elementary school, what sort of things, I assume you turned into a reader fairly early? Was this part of your life?

RESTON: Yes it was. Both of my brothers were very strong athletes and I decided I could not compete in that game and so I became a reader and I was always very interested in the world, very interested in geography and interested in politics and you know, I was interested in the things that the family talked about. Yes, I was a big reader, finding out about the world and about the nation.

Q: What about the public school at that time? The District of Columbia schools. Were you caught up in the integration crises and all that?

RESTON: Well, there are a couple of things about my public school background that I think in retrospect are interesting. First of all, when I started going to my elementary school it was a segregated school, an all-white school which was integrated when I was in about the second grade I think, second or third grade, a smooth integration. It was just a red brick public school, just as you might imagine a public school ought to be like. Then in

junior high school I went to a great big junior high school, which happened really to be the only integrated, seriously integrated, junior high school in the city. It was half black and half white.

Q: What was the name of it?

RESTON: It was called Gordon Junior High School in those days and it was in the Georgetown section of Washington, D.C. and it drew from all over the city and I went to junior high school at an interesting time because I got there in the fall of 1958 and that was just after the Russians had sent up Sputnik and there was a feeling in the government that the Russians were “getting ahead of us” and that they had to find the bright kids and put them together in a classroom and feed them a lot of math and science. I was the beneficiary of that in my junior high school. I had a wonderful, wonderfully bright homeroom of very good students. We got along quite well and they really pushed us in that school. I had a wonderful education there.

Q: Were you, how did you fit into the world of science and mathematics?

RESTON: I did quite well in science, but because it was kind of associated with math in my mind I always thought that I wouldn't be very good at it because I had math block. I never got very good grades in math, although I think I mean my testing later on showed that I have a good aptitude for math, but I for some reason I just was against it from the beginning.

Q: Well, then in reading, what sort of books, can you think of any books that influenced you or you remember when you were young?

RESTON: I'm not sure I can think of anything in particular, but I read a lot of American history. I read a lot of world history. It was the world I was interested in and from a young very young age, when I was in, say, third or fourth grade, I started taking private French lessons and learned how to speak pretty fluent French and good-sounding French. I have

a good French accent and so I got interested in European politics and that kind of thing and I have a particular love for France as well as other countries in Western Europe, but because I speak the language I enjoy even now going back to France.

Q: Did your father hold I won't say a salon, but Alsops and others in Washington, some of the columnists were renowned for having dinner parties for all the movers and shakers to get together and all that. Was that part of your existence or not?

RESTON: No. My parents were not big entertainers. They did not have fancy dinner parties for politicians and diplomatic people. What happened quite often is that Dad would come home from the office and he would bring journalists, newspaper people from his office. They would sit around and have drinks for an hour before they left to go home to have dinner so that what we had was we had newspaper guys in the house quite a bit from the bureau. Also sometimes other journalists from other institutions and they would sit around and talk about what they thought about a politician's problems that they were having on that particular day.

Q: Were you picking up an attitude towards you might say the politics of the day at all of what you were hearing?

RESTON: Yes. I was fascinated by American politics and I got myself into a kind of a conflicted situation, which I've always had for the rest of my life. My father was deeply suspicious of politicians and really believed in the mission of the press to expose the government and to correct things that were going wrong in the government. I still myself, even though I've served in the government, I still have that sort of attitude. At the same time I developed a love for politics and early on, when I was 10 years old, that was the first political campaign I was ever in. I worked for the national volunteers for Stevenson and Kefauver in the 1956 election. I used to go down there after school everyday and lick envelopes and then I would come home with my father from the office to dinner. I became

a Democratic politician for many years. Those remain my politics now although I'm not active anymore.

Q: You went to St. Albans then?

RESTON: Yes.

Q: For three years?

RESTON: Three years.

Q: Did you find a difference there between your junior high and all?

RESTON: Yes, very much. The private school kids, I liked both schools and still have good friends particularly from my public school years, but also from my private school years. They were much more sophisticated. They were richer. They were more sheltered. They were a bunch of very interesting people. I feel fondly toward both kinds of schooling that I had.

Q: Did you get involved in elections working for the democratic elections, get after school jobs and all or summer jobs?

RESTON: Yes. In 1958 I went back to the Democratic National Committee when I was 12 and worked in the library there during the congressional elections and then, for years. I had a series of political jobs, both while I was in school and after I got out of school. I was kind of a chronic campaigner for many years.

Q: Did you get involved in D.C. politics or were there many politics?

RESTON: No, I was never really involved in D.C. politics, and in those days, there wasn't much. It was so controlled by the Congress, but where my political roots developed was

in the state of Virginia and mainly, although I lived in Northern Virginia, my main political roots were down in Tidewater, Virginia.

Q: Why was that?

RESTON: I became a prot#g# of a man who was a real machine politician from Norfolk, Virginia, and he was a state senator from Norfolk and he was kind of the organizer of political campaigns statewide in Virginia for the liberal side of the Democratic party, the side that was kind of trying to chip away at the Byrd Machine which was running the state in those days.

Q: I mean did the Byrd machine in your mind become sort of the enemy?

RESTON: Yes, it did. I can remember it was a very formative experience for me. In 1957, I think it was when I was 11 years old the Byrd Machine closed the public schools in Virginia to avoid racial integration. They were closed in certain parts of the state, in Prince Edward County in Southside, and Alexandria here in Northern Virginia, and out in Front Royal, Virginia, and as a young kid going to school I just could not imagine any reason to close the public schools. It so offended me that that's really what drew me into politics: the closure of public schools. I said, well, you know it's clear that this is an injustice and that the best way to solve this sort of injustice is to get involved in politics, and I did, and ultimately became secretary of the State Democratic Party of Virginia in the 1970s when the liberals took over the leadership of the party in Virginia. My mentor became chairman of the Democratic Party.

Q: Who was your mentor?

RESTON: He was a man named Joe Fitzpatrick. He was a state senator and retired as the treasurer of the city of Norfolk. Virginia is a very eclectic state politically. Up here in Northern Virginia people are very interested in issues and good government and that sort

of thing. Down in Tidewater it was real machine, brass-collar Democratic politics. He was an organizer and a manipulator of the liberal political machine in Norfolk.

Q: The Byrd machine was really out of rural Virginia, was that it?

RESTON: Yes. The genius of the Byrd Machine - the old Senator Byrd was governor of Virginia in the 1920s; he came to power as a reformer really on the promise of farm-to-market roads and he was a reformer — clean government, simplify government, but the genius behind his half-century control over the destiny of the state was that he did not allow anybody to vote. Certainly not black people, but they didn't really allow white people to vote either, so that in the heyday of the Byrd Organization in Virginia in the late '40s we were electing governors in Virginia with less than 5% of people over 21 years of age.

Q: How did they keep people from voting?

RESTON: The poll tax, a tax you have to pay in order to vote. You also had to interpret a section of the constitution for the election judge. He would read it to you and you would have to say what it meant and if he didn't want you voting he would say, well, you interpreted it incorrectly. Even when I was in law school, in the 1970s, in the next county over from where I was, right next to Charlottesville, Virginia, the registrar's office in Green County was open one hour a month, and it was always at the whim of the county registrar. It was not announced when it would be open and so nobody knew when they could register to vote. The whole operation was brilliant. It was run through the clerks of county courts in each of the counties in Virginia, but it was all based on controlling the number of people who were able to vote. They had tiny votes. They won all the elections.

Q: Of course this is a different era and all, there must have been challenges to this to the legality of this? I guess it went to the court and the court threw it out?

RESTON: Ultimately, after many long court battles the closing down of the public schools was ruled illegal, but still there were so-called segregation academies where they closed

the public schools and they put the tax money into so-called private academies in the county which were segregated. There was no place for the blacks to go to school. That was finally not wiped out until the 1970s in some areas of the state, particularly Prince Edward County and Southside. I didn't really get involved in any legal challenges to the way things were set up. I got involved in just going at them politically to try, as the electorate began to expand, just to try to throw them out of office, which we finally did. We chipped away and chipped away, and then a lot of them left the Democratic Party to become Republicans.

Q: When you graduated, you graduated from St. Albans when?

RESTON: In 1964.

Q: Did you get involved, did you find yourself emotionally involved in the 1960 campaign of Kennedy versus Nixon and a lot of people caught fire at this time, how about you?

RESTON: Yes, I did. I worked for Kennedy in 1960 and again at the Democratic National Committee after school every afternoon. I used to go down and work there. I was very excited by the 1960 election. I followed it just thrillingly from beginning to end and you know I was very happy when Kennedy got elected. I was never a great believer in Dick Nixon. Yes I was involved in that campaign.

Q: What were you picking up from your father about this? I mean both Kennedy and Nixon were flawed characters.

RESTON: Indeed they were.

Q: Did a sort of a newspaperman's cynicism penetrate you or not?

RESTON: Well, I was young. In 1960 I would have been 14 years old, so I was not a cynic, I don't think, about politics in those days. I was very like a lot of people; I was caught up in the kind of excitement of the Kennedy people. You know, my father's view of politicians

as I mentioned earlier, he was deeply suspicious of them and of the government, but he wasn't corrupted by his cynicism. He was, I think, a rather amiable skeptic, and he also built his career on gaining the trust of people in power so that they would talk to them and felt that, I mean, instead of grinding a political ax, his theory of his column was that it would be like writing a letter to somebody out in the country about how the government really was working and what they were really struggling with. Often he was known as being on this side or the other side of issues, but I don't think anybody ever really tabbed him as a liberal or a conservative. The people in power trusted him. When I went to the State Department for the first time, just as a casual question, I asked him, well, who do you believe was the best secretary of State of the 20th Century, because he had known all of them intimately since the 1940s and, without skipping a beat, he said “Jimmy Byrnes.” And I said, “Jimmy Byrnes, why ever would you mention him?” He said, “Well, because every morning he and I would sit down in his office, the two of us alone, and we would review together the cable traffic that had come in over the previous night.” He sat there everyday at the desk at 7:00 and they would discuss the night's cables. It's just extraordinary to think that that could happen in this day and age, but it was the way he worked day-in and day-out covering the State Department for the New York Times. People, as I say, they trusted him to be fair and to really explain the troubles they were having in the public print and yet Dad was suspicious of them. But he wasn't angry at them all the time the way some newspaper people are.

Q: When you graduated from St. Albans in 1964 did you know where you wanted to go?

RESTON: Yes, I went to Harvard as an undergraduate in 1964 and I studied. I was in a major called social studies which was a combination of history, government, economics and sociology and with those disciplines you could study either industrialized societies, international relations or developing societies and I chose to study political and economic problems of the Third World and revolution in the Third World in the 1960s.

Q: Was this a time, I think he was Harvard, Walt Rostow had his takeoff theory. I can't remember the book.

RESTON: I forget the title, but it was the takeoff theory, and I did read him.

Q: I was just wondering whether this was sort of a parading idea that certain countries have the potential really to emerge and all. Was there an attitude that your professors were giving you toward the Third World?

RESTON: Yes, it was very exciting times both for what was going on in the world and also for intellectual study about it because the experience of virtually all of these countries was they had just entered the post-colonial period. Remember I only went to Harvard in 1964 and the British empire, most of the African countries achieved their independence in the early '60s so that nobody really knew what was going to happen and nobody really knew, I mean there were emerging academic theories such as Rostow's takeoff theory of how these countries would develop and what was the best way to help them develop as quickly as possible. Yes, I read all of those kinds of political and economic theories when I was at Harvard. The experience of the countries was very new and fresh. There was not a culture of failure. There was a culture of kind of not knowing what was going to happen.

Q: Did Vietnam cross or become an overriding factor while you were there at Harvard?

RESTON: It was a fascinating time to be at college from 1964 to 1968 because it changed, the spirit of campuses changed 180 degrees during those years. We went to college certainly having a profound belief in the United States, in that while we might have a lot of problems here, but with enough good will, which we were convinced we had, and enough money, you could solve almost any problem. Civil rights was a kind of a gleaming example of how we were really going to solve this problem finally that had laid without a solution for so long in our history. We actually saw evidence that it was getting changed and was getting solved and when I went to college Vietnam was only a big thing on the horizon,

one of many disputes in the Third World, a struggle between the Soviets and ourselves for influence, but it was not something that we were focusing on, but there again as with civil rights, by the end of my time in college, obviously Vietnam was completely overriding in our minds and in the minds of students. Civil rights turned out to be a problem, which maybe was not so simple to solve.

Q: Well, did you get involved in either of the movements, the civil rights movement or the anti-Vietnam?

RESTON: Yes, both of them. I came when I was in college to what I have remained for the rest of my life, which is really a firm believer in civil rights, and always throughout my career I have worked in one way or another either full-time or through extensive commitments of time to civil rights in the United States. I also became involved in the anti-war movement, always with, I'm not a person who is kind of an extreme, I'm a more cautious person so I always kind of had one foot clearly in the zone of safety and one foot in the zone of, you know, this is really a terrible situation and we have to move against it. We have to find a way to force the government to stop its policy in Vietnam.

Q: How did you find Harvard? Let's take the civil rights movement first. It was pretty far from the fray which is down in the South, although right across the river in Boston they had this, I don't know if they had the school crisis when you were there.

RESTON: Not when I was there. That came two years later in about 1970.

Q: Yes, but then you had all hell was breaking loose in the South. What was happening on the Harvard campus regarding this?

RESTON: There was enormous amount discussion about the events in the South on the Harvard campus and there were large numbers of kids that were going South to work in the summer or leaving school to go and work for a year or so in the South to try to effect change. I for instance went to work for the Atlanta Constitution, well, I worked on a weekly

newspaper in Virginia in the summer of 1964, and then in the summer of 1965 I went to work for the Atlanta Constitution in Atlanta and covered some of the civil rights unrest in Georgia that summer.

Q: Where did a paper like the Atlanta Constitution, which is the preeminent paper of Georgia, stand on this?

RESTON: I think it had a reputation, the Constitution had a reputation of being a great kind of battler for civil rights, but it wasn't really. It had a wonderful, wonderful columnist named Ralph McGill who wrote very movingly about the troubles of the South and was known, and was, a voice of conscious in the South. The Constitution was very chary about exposing itself to too much heat from its readers by becoming too much identified with the movement. For instance there was a reasonable amount of trouble in Georgia, in South Georgia, in 1965, in the summer of 1965, but the Constitution was very late to send its reporters to Americus, Georgia which was where it was principally happening. The rest of the big newspapers in America had people in America for two weeks before the Constitution ever started sending people there. I'm not sure it was such a liberal paper as it had a reputation of being.

Q: You weren't working for it during the '65 period?

RESTON: I was. I was working in Atlanta for the Constitution that summer.

Q: Were people on the paper saying, why aren't we sending people?

RESTON: Yes, they were. They were furious at management for not sending people. They thought it was not very courageous of the paper. Not covering the news. After all, it was news.

Q: What was going on?

RESTON: In Americus, Georgia, which is near Plains, Georgia, which was where President Carter was from, it was voter registration, and they had huge long lines of people waiting on the courthouse lawn to try to get in to register to vote. There were organizers coming in from various parts of the nation to help them organize that and it was very slow-going. They weren't making much progress, but nevertheless you could see a people mobilizing and demanding their rights as citizens. It was quite moving.

Q: What were you doing on the paper?

RESTON: I was just a general assignment reporter and of course I was very excited by what was happening in South Georgia and when they finally did decide to send a senior reporter down there I tagged along with him and spent a couple of weeks down there just watching the people try to vote and talking to the people who were trying to prevent them from voting and talking to the police who were trying to keep them apart.

Q: Did you find that you were sort of a stranger in a strange land when you got into this deep South?

RESTON: Yes, I had never really been in the deep South before that summer. I had spent a lot of time in Virginia, in rural Virginia, but Virginia is not like the deep South. It's got different political traditions, although many of the same evil results as far as race was concerned, but it had a much more decorous political tradition than places like Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi and yes it was very foreign to me. I was determined to learn about it and I was determined it wasn't so much, you know, I really wanted to go down there and immerse myself in it and I wanted to be fair in my own mind to the people that were on the other side. I wanted to understand them and why they felt it was so important to maintain things the way they had always been maintained.

Q: What were you getting from these people, the people who were trying to maintain that this was the previous system?

RESTON: Well, when I went to Americus for instance, there were organizers coming in from all over the country trying to organize the black people down there, but there were kind of crazy white people there who were making an effort on the side of the status quo. I made friends with Lester Maddox, who became a champion, a well known champion of the anti-civil rights movement and later became governor of Georgia, and I spent some time with him in Americus and drove back with him from Americus to Atlanta after my stay down there. We drove through the middle of the night and he took me to a Klan meeting in somebody's basement on the way back.

Q: You're talking about the Ku Klux Klan?

RESTON: Yes. On the way back from Americus. I mean I remember him up on that courthouse lawn talking to his supporters and long lines of black people in the middle of the night and he had his big group of white people. I can remember him saying that night “the Good Book says that thou shall not covet and these Nigras are coveting what we have.” So, it was really balls-out, right on the surface. There wasn't anything subtle about what was going on. I liked him. He was an enormously friendly and engaging and interesting man.

Q: Did you get a chance to take a look and see where the blacks in that part of the South, what their living conditions were like? I mean what segregation had meant to them?

RESTON: Yes, because I was a reporter moving around. I don't think I got a very intimate feeling for it, but I mean I spent a lot of time that summer on the police beat covering crime in Atlanta and I saw a lot of people who were getting in trouble with the police and saw their neighborhoods in Atlanta and I did some traveling around that summer and later on in the rural South. I saw some of that as well.

Q: How did you find the reporters there? I mean you were a cub reporter, but a kid from up North and all that. How did that sit with them?

RESTON: I was very conscious that I came from a newspaper family and I had a real prominent last name as far as newspaper people were concerned. That was always in the back of my mind, but you know, journalists are wonderful people; as a class of people, they're almost my favorite people. It's a great secret mutual-aid society, so they really do try to help each other out and share information and stories and advice with each other, and there was a very easy-going fun big city room at that newspaper, and I kind of got a lot of newspaper lore and newspapermen tell very funny cynical stories about how they work and the characters and scoundrels that they write about.

Q: Atlanta was, I mean it's very much, politics were very much a driving force there.

RESTON: Atlanta, then and now, sort of, there was a gentleman's understanding about how Atlanta should be run. It was an island in the middle of this very rural conservative state, but the deal in Atlanta was between the business community, which didn't want any trouble in Atlanta — they just wanted to make money — and the black people who wanted to vote and they wanted to control the city government and so it was and it still is a gentleman's understanding between those two political interests that resulted in a more open climate in Atlanta than you would find in rural Georgia.

Q: I always feel close to Atlanta because my grandfather helped burn the place down. He was an officer in Sherman's army.

RESTON: Yes. I hope you don't tell that story too much when you go to Atlanta. That sort of thing was very much alive when I was there. I don't think anybody really cares all that much about it now.

Q: They look at you blankly.

RESTON: Fortunately or otherwise.

Q: Well, particularly at this time did you find yourself, I mean obviously you had your father, but did you have any newspaper gods that were writing about the civil rights?

RESTON: Well, Ralph McGill was a kind of, I mean he really was a saint of journalism and of conscience in the South. I did know Mr. McGill. I used to go and sit in his office and talk to him about the soul of the South and he was quite active in those days. I suppose he was the reigning figure on the Constitution in those days, but there were other people like Reg Murphy who finally became the editor of the Atlanta Constitution later on. He was a reporter then. Jack Nelson who became, he was the investigative reporter of the Atlanta Constitution and finally came to the Los Angeles Times and was the head of the Washington bureau of the Los Angeles Times. So, there were many fine journalists there. It was a first time that I had ever worked for a big city paper and so it was my formative experience.

Q: Did you get any feel for the management of the Constitution?

RESTON: None whatsoever.

Q: They were just too far away?

RESTON: Yes, I was just a summer cup reporter and I did not meet them or know them at all.

Q: Then another summer you worked for what a Virginia paper?

RESTON: Yes, I worked for a weekly newspaper in Virginia called the Fauquier Democrat and it was a weekly newspaper in a rural county west of Washington and deeply conservative, deeply anti-civil rights in its editorial policy and I just covered farm issues and I was just a general assignments summer reporter in a rural setting in Virginia.

Q: Was there much fermenting in Fauquier county at that time?

RESTON: No. It was not talked about. The schools were virtually segregated, and as it was, they had closed the schools in Fauquier County during massive resistance in Virginia, but in a very un-American kind of way, polite people did not want to talk about the situation. It was clearly an embarrassment if you raised it at the dinner table. They felt very uneasy talking about it, but everybody knew that there was this very rigid structure there and there were a lot of people who disapproved of it and they were afraid somehow that it would come unstuck and so they just didn't want to talk about it.

Q: I'm somewhat familiar with it because my son-in-law and daughter have a place out near Upperville. Was there a big social division there?

RESTON: Not as much as in a place like Upperville or Middleburg, but you know there are some very well-to-do people in Fauquier County, but in those days it was generally farming country. There were horse-racing rich people around, but not to the extent that there is now in that county. It was a working county in those days.

Q: Where was the county seat?

RESTON: Warrenton.

Q: Well, then at Harvard did you get involved in what was it the Harvard Crimson or anything of that?

RESTON: Yes, I went to work for the Harvard Crimson, the student newspaper. I did two kinds of things for them. I was a sports reporter for the Crimson and covered the crew and other sports and I wrote editorials for the Crimson. I never became, although, you know, I was a full-fledged reporter for the Crimson, it never became part of, I mean it never took over my life, the way it did for many people who did work on it. I was not ever in the management of the thing or spending hundreds and hundreds of hours there, but I was there.

Q: Did you have, were there any issues at Harvard while you were working on it? I suppose Vietnam and all that, but were there other issues, local ones?

RESTON: What happened was, I think, because these two enormous emotional issues were so much talked about in a national and international sense among kids — the civil rights thing and the Vietnam thing — that if you begin to naturally kind of delve into one political problem, you say, well, you know if there's national civil rights problems where one crowd is in control and trying to keep other people out, well, maybe there are other kinds of institutions in society that work that way, too, and so there developed a whole kind of offshoot of that, of people who got interested in finding out just exactly how Harvard worked and who had the power at Harvard and who only had the appearance of power, and so there was a, because the students were so frustrated and they couldn't just come to Washington and change American foreign policy they said, well, we've got to start changing things that we can get our hands on and that means trying to change the structure of the university. As it happened, Harvard generally is a pretty sophisticated place that can manage trouble to the sidelines and it was not entirely successful while I was there because there were some student outbreaks and some ugly situations particularly involving the Secretary of Defense, Bob McNamara who was kind of mobbed by the students when he came to talk, but Harvard didn't come completely unstuck administratively until the fall after I left Harvard. That was when the huge takeover of the administration building and the defenestration of the deans and the calling in of the police to turn the kids out of the administration buildings and the true violence on the campus. It was very bitter when I left. People were very bitter at the university.

Q: What were they bitter about?

RESTON: They felt that Harvard was complicit in this kind of giant amorphous structure that was controlling our destinies. I mean that it was taking a lot of federal money and doing a lot of scientific research for the military and providing a lot of brains for these

policies that, you know, it sent a lot of people to the Kennedy administration and they remained during the Johnson administration.

Q: Well, the Kennedy and Johnson administration were loaded with Harvard types.

RESTON: Yes, Mac Bundy.

Q: Did you get the feeling that you were having people who were sort of marking their time until they could go in and grab power?

RESTON: No, no, because in those days there was an enormous hostility to the government in Cambridge, Massachusetts and it would have been considered a blot on your copy book to work for the government because everybody — it's a very precious community up there, you know — it's quite politically correct and everybody thought they knew better than what the government was doing.

Q: How about was Henry Kissinger there when you were there?

RESTON: Yes, but I didn't know him and he taught at the graduate level. He was there and he was kind of a star of intellectual, academic foreign policy theories, but I did not know him.

Q: I mean outside of Vietnam, what were you getting about say the Soviet Union and all? Was Marxism a pervasive theory and all or not?

RESTON: I read a lot of Marxist-Leninist theory and we studied a lot about the Soviet Union and the Russian Revolution and lot of socialist theory. My department or my major at Harvard had a lot of faculty in it that were known to be on the left and again my focus was on problems in the Third World in the developing world. One of the big things that I did while I was there, my thesis I wrote, I thought, and still think now was an interesting thesis. I wrote it about Cuba and I wrote it in 1967, eight years after Castro had come to power and I went to Cuba in the summer of my rising senior year in college and I was the

first American student to get into Cuba legally since they had closed it down in 1960, when we broke our relations with Cuba. My field of study for my thesis was how the Cubans had this idea that they would build a New Man as the Russians and the Chinese before them had decided that they would build a New Man, but the Cuban New Man was different from the Soviet New Man, the model of which was a sweating industrial worker, and the Chinese New Man who was the revolutionary peasant, rural peasant. Well, the New Man for the Cubans was the guerrilla fighter in the mountains, as Castro had been, and as Che Guevara was, and so these Cuban kids were being trained to be a New Man like Che Guevara, and my study was, well, what is this New Man? How do they train him to be the New Man? How do they impart this doctrine to him? What is the difference, what are the implications for Cuba, for the different model that they have adopted from the Chinese and Russian models? And finally, what will the difference be when the so-called new generation takes over and Castro leaves? What will the difference between them and Castro's generation be? Of course that final thing is yet to be seen since he's never left.

I wrote this thesis. I spent a lot of time with Cuban kids that summer. They took, in those days, all the best junior high school students, seventh graders from all over the island. They took them out of their homes and they took them up into the mountains in Oriente Province. They kept them there for a year, away from their families, and they drilled them in this ideology, and I spent weeks in those camps, talking to kids and talking to the teachers there about what they were trying to accomplish, and then came back and wrote what I thought was an interesting thesis, and evidently the faculty thought it was an interesting thesis. I got a summa cum laude on it, and Castro himself ultimately read the thesis, as I came into conflict with him later on in my career. He said that he thought that it was interesting. Now, that was quite alarming to me when I heard that.

Q: Well, did you come away with any impressions about, I mean, you know, one you're doing the objective reporting, but did you come away with any impressions about Marxist Cuban society and economics, how was this working?

RESTON: Yes, I did. I mean, you've got to remember in those days I was 20 years old so I was a kid and it was very exciting to be in Cuba in those days. You really felt the excitement of this place. You really felt well these people have changed their society and they've got ideas that could quite possibly, they've got a model that quite possibly could gain a real momentum in the world that would be very damaging to the interests of the United States. There was the excitement of the forbidden. You were in a place that was officially disapproved of by your own government. There was a lot of preaching about the conflict between the U.S. and Cuba and how unfairly Cuba had been dealt with for decades by the United States and how unjustly they were being held in isolation. It was very thrilling, you know, for a 20-year-old to be there. I've visited Cuba subsequently on three or four occasions and it is anything but thrilling. It became quite dead and irrelevant in later years, but in those years they didn't feel that they were irrelevant.

Q: It sounds, I mean were you looking at this, I mean if you're training guerrilla fighters and the war is already won in Cuba it just means that they're getting ready to export doesn't it?

RESTON: That's right and there was, that particular summer, there was a conference held in Cuba in 1967, that was known as OLAS, O-L-A-S, the Organization of Latin American Solidarity. They brought representatives of guerrilla movements from each of the Latin American countries and they smuggled them into Cuba and they had this great big conference there. Che Guevara had been dispatched to Bolivia about a month before I arrived in Cuba that summer so there was a lot of speculation about where he was, but they really, I mean, to listen to them talk, they were saying, well, we are going to send the whole continent up in flames, just the way Vietnam has been sent up into flames. As I say there was the lure of the forbidden about it. You were very interested to see whether they could actually manage it. Now, as it turned out of course they didn't manage it at all, but they were certainly, it was the main thing they were trying to accomplish that summer that I was there.

Q: How about what were you getting from the faculty when you're looking at Third World countries, particularly thinking of Africa and all. There was an awful lot on the British side of socialism and nationalizing everything and all, you might say sort of a British London school of economics theories of extreme socialism. Was there any question about how this was going because frankly at least in my view it really led to disaster. Was there a question among the faculty?

RESTON: Yes, but as I say, it was such a new field, the decolonization was a very fresh experience, and there were beginning to be developed a lot of academic theories about the best way to do this. They were in conflict and so there was a lot of debate about, do you take the Indian model of state socialism, or do you take a different model, and what's best for India, or what would work best in an African context? There wasn't the kind of 30 or 40 years of experience with it all that we have now and there certainly wasn't this deadening sense of failure of all models that often creeps into discussions of many places in Africa unfortunately now. It was all so new. I mean, you had experts on Algeria or experts on West Africa, but they were experts that had two or three years experience.

Q: Yes, it was a great learning experience to everybody. Unfortunately the African population suffered because of it.

RESTON: Yes. I felt that the proof is in the pudding and half a century along we still have grotesque situations of indignity and it's a heartbreaker.

Q: It really is. Well, was there any sort of lingering admiration for the Marxist model in the Soviet Union?

RESTON: Yes, I think there was. I have never been a pro-Soviet person. I became a quite anti-Soviet person later on in my life, but I kind of studied it, I wouldn't say objectively, but I saw nothing wrong with studying it. For me it was like studying the French Revolution. It was kind of an experiment in how revolutions develop and so we read Russian history and

I read a lot about the Chinese Revolution and it was taught by people, I don't think any of them were beating the drums for the Chinese Revolution or the Russian Revolution, but they didn't see anything wrong in studying it either.

Q: I'm not thinking of wrong, but thinking that I mean campus Marxist still hangs on, but it lasted a hell of a long time.

RESTON: Yes, well, you see my experience with this sort of thing — I came maybe one or two generations too late to really experience the whole question of whether American communism or Marxist-Leninism of the American sort could really be a factor. I came of age with the anti-war movement and the people that we thought were really alive as political forces were not communists. They felt that the communist thing was lazy and tired and irrelevant and it was kind of back-in-the-1930s and that the exciting, moving thing now were the intellectual grandchildren of that. You know, we thought the communists in America were kind of jokes and conservatives, and not to be trusted, because they could just be told off to do whatever somebody else wanted them to do, and they'd do it. I thought they were irrelevant or contemptible.

Q: Did Israel cross your radar at all? This was '67 War there, I was wondering.

RESTON: Yes. I was in college then and we could see that war developing and there was a lot of talk about it. There was a lot of interest on campus about it. I never had any question of what would happen once the war began, but there was a lot of discussion on what was going to happen: are they going to be overrun or are they going to be able to take care of themselves? I had done a lot of reading and studying about the politics of the Middle East so I was quite familiar with the basics of Middle East politics, not only Arab Israeli politics, but conflicts between Syria and Egypt also, and I knew what the meaning of Lebanon was, and the European experience of setting up the chess board in the Middle East after the First World War. So, yes, that was very much talked about and of interest to a lot of people on campus, including me.

Q: The actual Palestinian cause was not mentioned much, was it?

RESTON: No. It was, I think young people in those days were very sympathetic to the Israelis, I mean the young people that I came in touch with. I think Palestinians of the violent sort were looked on as terrorists. I think people probably would, if you would really delve into, it people would have said, well, yes, there is some sort of problem here that really needs to be dealt with, but there was not much deep consideration of it, the merits of the Palestinian side, which of course there has come to be since then, and there should have been in those days, but the circles I moved in, they were not interested so much in delving into it.

Q: This is true across the board in American society. What about, well, then you graduated in 1968?

RESTON: That's correct. In 1968 I graduated in June. I was very anxious to get out of college. I had been very anxious to for about six months. I immediately well, in my spring of my senior year I went to work for Bob Kennedy who was running for President, Senator Robert Kennedy. I was a speechwriter for him and then he and Martin Luther King were assassinated just before, and then just after, I got out of college, virtually on my graduation day, almost, for Bobby Kennedy. I then went to work for Senator McCarthy who was also running for president.

Q: Eugene McCarthy.

RESTON: Right. I became a press spokesman for him for the credentials and rules fights at the Chicago Democratic National Convention that summer so I saw the struggles inside the party. Credentials battles are wonderful because that's real, naked power; it's a real power struggle whenever you have a credentials fight. All the questions were involving breaking the unit rule of state delegations to the Democratic National Convention, all the questions of whether the Southern...

Q: Mississippi delegation wasn't it?

RESTON: Well, the big fight over the Mississippi delegation had taken place, the so-called Freedom Democrats in 1964, but there were a lot of Southern delegations under challenge because they were segregated and had come up through unfair processes. There was in all kinds of delegations — not only in the South — the Maryland delegation in those days, for instance: the whole delegation was hand-picked by the governor of Maryland. Obviously, whether he had a unit rule or not was irrelevant since they were all his political servants and he could vote them in a block just by telling them what to do. There was a lot of soul-searching and turning spotlights on these various local rules that the Democratic party had had for so many decades. All of that was in turmoil, and, of course, the convention itself was just a catastrophe.

Q: In the first place, how did you, you're pretty young to be a spokesperson.

RESTON: Well, the McCarthy campaign was very catch-as-catch-can. They had a lot of work to do and it was all volunteers and so they realized that they were behind the eight ball and they had to try to unseat as many people as they could in order to have a chance — they never really did have a chance. They said, well, my God, we've got to have somebody to do this and so I was just dispatched to do it and spent about three weeks in Chicago before the convention unfolded, you know, just marching various of these challenging delegations through press conferences to tell about how they'd been badly treated in Connecticut or Texas or wherever. That was a lot of fun.

Q: While you were in Chicago did you see the storm that turned out to be the disaster shaping up?

RESTON: Oh, yes. It was a very ominous feeling that something was building here which was clearly going to get out-of-hand, because the people who wanted to disrupt the convention were so intent on doing it, and the people who wanted to keep it quiet and

under control were not sophisticated. They just decided well, we've got to put it down nakedly, and it, of course, exploded, once they all reached Chicago together.

Q: This of course was Mayor Daley being the major figure there.

RESTON: Yes.

Q: But was there any feeling that okay we're going to win this battle and we're sure as hell going to lose it to Richard Nixon or what I think would calm anybody down.

RESTON: No. The feeling of the people on the left or on the liberal side, I mean, I never was and am not now on the left, but the people, I think, who supported Kennedy and McCarthy by the middle of the summer — their attitude was, well, we really don't care. We've just got to stick up for what we believe in and we've got to act however we can to act on our principles and if this is going to cause a problem in the fall we can't take that too much into account now. As it turned out, I, being one of these cautious people, very much had it in my mind, and ultimately went to work for Hubert Humphrey in the fall, but very much in the disapproval of my friends who had been working for McCarthy.

Q: What was your impression of Eugene McCarthy?

RESTON: Well, again I thought he was very much to be admired for not calculating the odds, but sticking up for what he believed in regardless of what the odds were of his winning, and I thought he was decorous. I thought he was too intellectual really to be a good political leader. I never for a moment thought that he could win the nomination, but I approved of him because he was a man who was stating what he believed in and acting on it.

Q: How about the people that you were dealing with, did you find, I mean were these, were they people of firm beliefs or were they people who were using the occasion to you might say to advance their careers?

RESTON: You know, kind of unlike most of the people I've met in politics, I think they were people genuinely of principle. They really, they didn't believe in Vietnam. They were very distressed for their country because of what was going on in Vietnam. They were not self-serving careerists and they had the luxury of acting from principle. Therefore, I don't think they were very good politicians. Not my kind of politics in any event. I come from a much more sordid political background than that.

Q: Did you get involved one way or the other or what did you think about the demonstrations? The demonstrations that in a way ruined Humphrey's chances. Did you get involved in this at all?

RESTON: Yes, sure, I was all in the midst of it. I mean, I had a feeling that my friends were in the streets and the police were on the other side and this was, it was my friends against the police, was my kind of attitude. I was both inside the hall and outside the hall and of course the struggles were going on inside the hall. Battles over the foreign policy platform, and great black banners, great black crepe hanging all over various delegation standards. I mean, you really felt like the whole, it was the whole struggle of the last two or three years in American politics, it was being fought out in that hall. Then you had this morass outside, of just people who didn't have a clue really about how things worked, but they just felt that they ought to be there in their frustration to somehow throw themselves, to try to effect some change.

Q: Did you get down in the mob?

RESTON: Yes. I was working during the day in the convention hall and then at night I was staying in the Conrad Hilton Hotel, and it was across the street, across Michigan Avenue, in Lincoln Park, is it or Grant Park, or wherever, that's where the police kept sweeping through to sweep out the people and so I would go out into the park at night and the place was ringed by cops and you had the feeling, oh, my goodness, we live in a Stalinist

whatever. It was ridiculous. It was kind of that feeling about it. It was very odd for America, you know. It's not supposed to be that way in our country.

Q: When Humphrey was nominated, was there a tremendous, was there a feeling, here is a man whose been on the right side in just about everything and he just or was he considered just a tool of the forces of evil or what?

RESTON: I think most of my friends in the McCarthy campaign, as I say, I think now and I thought then, that they were terrible politicians and that they, I think there was a lot of bitterness when McCarthy lost the nomination.

When Humphrey won the nomination, I think the McCarthy people were very let down and just felt that you know, that Humphrey was just a tool of the kind of worst elements in the party and toadying for the president. By contrast, I loved Hubert Humphrey. Just absolutely loved him. I loved him before he was running for president and I loved him in 1968. I thought he was a true-believing guy that in all the panoply of all the New Deal reforms and the greatness that those things brought to American society, and I thought he was, as a person, he just was so warm-hearted, he loved people. I just absolutely adored him, but, very embarrassedly, I went to work for him after the convention and really felt that maybe I was doing something wrong in abandoning my old friends from the anti-war movement and the McCarthy campaign. But the thing that got to me was not only that he was a good man, Humphrey, but clearly that the people on the other side, the Nixon people, or Nixon himself really was much more damaging potentially to the country than anything that the Democrats could have produced in Hubert Humphrey. So, at the beginning I was embarrassed, and by the end of the campaign, I was thinking oh my goodness it is dreadfully important to win this election and it became very exciting toward the end. It was very very close and I think the Humphrey people thought they were going to win. I was with Humphrey for the last month of the campaign.

Q: What were you doing?

RESTON: I was a baggage-smasher on a plane. I was loading bags in and out of the campaign plane and so I flew all over the country with him and attended his rallies at the end of the campaign. The day before the election he was in Los Angeles, in East Los Angeles, kind of being mobbed by a million Latinos in East Los Angeles, and I was running along the side of his limousine with the Secret Service, and these people were clutching for him like he was a movie star or rock star or something. We really felt that it was within grasp, and of course it wasn't at all, and as it turned out, it quite nearly was. I was a crowd raiser for part of that campaign. I would build crowds for Humphrey to speak to.

Q: How does one build a crowd?

RESTON: I had all different kinds of ways depending on the situation. I did a crowd in Northeast Ohio, in Canton, Ohio, and there was from Canton a guy who had won the gold medal in the Olympics that summer. He was a middle weight boxer, a black guy and he obviously was a hero in Canton and I went to the school superintendent and said I want you to let the schools out for Humphrey when he comes to Canton so we can have all these school children see Humphrey. He said, no, I won't do it. I said, well, suppose I produce this boxer to come with him. He said, well, then I would let the schools out. We had to find this guy in Mexico City where the Olympics were held and we had the American ambassador in the embassy out looking for him. I suppose this was wrong, the embassy shouldn't have been used for this, but they found him in some bar in Mexico City, flew him to Washington and he made the plane with Humphrey by 30 minutes in Washington and he arrived in Canton. They did agree to let the schools out so we could build the crowd and when he got there to the airport the press said to him, well, why are you here with the vice president? He said: “Winners stick together.” They said, well, why are you for Humphrey? He said, “Well, I got my chance through the Job Corps. If it hadn't been for the Job Corps I would be nothing.” He was great. He did more than build a crowd for Humphrey that day.

Q: Oh boy. Well, what about your friends in the McCarthy campaign, which I think was a children's crusade wasn't it?

RESTON: Yes.

Q: Did they write you off or what?

RESTON: I got very frosty looks from them and I got letters from people saying you're really sailing under too many flags here and you shouldn't be involved with that. By the end of the campaign I was convinced that what I had done was right so I was proud of my service for Humphrey and for McCarthy and for Kennedy that year. I was convinced and am convinced that I did the right thing.

Q: It was a very difficult political year.

RESTON: Very difficult.

Q: What had happened, I mean this was.

RESTON: People were very emotional and took it very seriously. I think this sounds terrible, but I think young people today don't have any idea what a truly emotional crisis for the country is like. It just seems these days that even big problems are not dealt with as intensely and emotionally as they have been at certain times in the past.

Q: Well, also they've been so much of it has been picked up by professionals when one looks at something picky like the George W. Bush campaign. Everything is spelled out. The crowds are assembled according to belief and carefully vetted and all this. Nothing is spontaneous.

RESTON: Right. There was a lot more spontaneity to it then, mainly perhaps because the politicians didn't know how to keep it buttoned up, so there was a lot more spontaneity to it and therefore it was more real and it was more fun, more interesting. The country was

different in different parts of the country. I went with Humphrey to Hudson County, New Jersey, and, you know, you never in your life saw such a big cast of thugs on the platform with a politician. But then you went to other places and everybody was in coats and ties and wondering about the details of this and that kind of legislation and it was very polite. But it's more homogenous now.

Q: How did you feel, what did you do when the election was lost?

RESTON: I was extremely disillusioned when Humphrey lost that election so closely and by that time I was a true believer in Humphrey and the importance of beating Nixon that year. I was just very down and I said “I want to get out of here. I want to leave the country and I, just kind of, I'm burnt out and I don't want to have anything really to do with the United States now.” So, I left.

Q: Was there a military draft issue at all?

RESTON: No, I have cerebral palsy and therefore I was 4F (draft-exempt). I registered for the draft the first day we bombed North Vietnam and so I was in a sense lucky to be able not to have that issue hanging over me. Of course all my male friends had that issue and it was talked about constantly when it was going on. I never had that issue.

Q: We're talking about, well, probably '69 aren't we?

RESTON: No, the fall of '68. Immediately after the election I decided to leave and I had no money. I got $1,000 from the Readers Digest to write an article about Cuba for the Readers Digest. I left the United States with $1,000 in my pocket and went to Cuba where I spent about six weeks, again writing, and I contacted the Boston Globe before I left. I had a one sentence letter from the editor of the Boston Globe saying Mr. Reston is a special correspondent of the Boston Globe. I had a knapsack and a typewriter. I left the country and I was gone for a year and a half and I spent less than $4,000 for a year and a half and I went around the world. I started in Cuba and then I went to Spain and wrote articles

for the Globe about what would happen to Spain after Franco and then I spent time in Western Europe. I wrote a series on American deserters from the 7th army in Germany, how they were living, where they were living. I went and spent some time in Britain. I went to Czechoslovakia and it was nine months after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and I wrote about Czechoslovakia and students in Czechoslovakia and the kind of mood in Prague after the thing had been crushed. Then I went in to Moscow for a month. My brother was the Los Angeles Times bureau chief in Moscow and I stayed with him and wrote about Russia. Then I went back to Eastern Europe, went all down through the Balkans, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, places like that, writing, trying to get, you know I used to get $50 from the Boston Globe for every article I did and it was an amazing experience because I had this silly little letter and it got me in to see everybody. I was seeing foreign ministers. It was really a fabulous experience. Then I went to the Middle East and spent maybe a month and a half in Israel and Egypt and Jordan and just all around Israel and in Israel writing about the Middle East. Then I started flying. I flew, this had all been hitchhiking and that sort of thing, third class railway tickets and I flew on to Iran. I wrote about the Shah and economic development in Iran and political troubles there and then I again started going overland. I went overland through Afghanistan and spent some time in Afghanistan and over the Khyber Pass and down into India where the Congress Party was splitting. I wrote about the split in the Congress Party and the parliamentary situation in India, so I spent some time in Delhi and some time in Calcutta. Then I flew on to Burma and Thailand and then I went into Vietnam for about six weeks and I got myself accredited for the Boston Globe there. The Globe did not have a correspondent in Vietnam in those days and I spent six weeks just really, not much of it in Saigon at all, but traveling around with the American troops out in, throughout the country. It was easy to move around.

Q: Yes, very much so.

RESTON: You could have access to helicopters and transports and that sort of thing so I was all over the country from the north to the south writing about the Vietnam War. That was a very emotional experience for me since I had been against the War and yet when I

got there I started to identify very strongly with the American troops there. I wanted to see it after having spent so much time thinking about it, but I wanted to see it in reality. Then I went on from there to the Philippines and Hong Kong and then finally on to Japan. By then I was really, I was kind of exhausted and very unsure about what the meaning of being away so long was and what my relation to the United States was and whether I really wanted to come back or not, it sounds very self-absorbed and it was very self-absorbed, but anyway I got on the plane from Tokyo and I came back and landed in San Francisco. I got up to the customs thing and there was this great, big, fat customs agent. Really tough looking guy that looked like he came out of, he looked like a Southern sheriff doing an impression of a Northerner whose never been down there and he looked at this passport of mine which had all these stamps on it from all kinds of countries that I shouldn't have been in at all and there was this little knapsack that I had. He took my knapsack away and went into the back room. I could see him unloading everything. I thought oh, this is just really going to be the crowning moment. This is going to be awful. He comes back. He put everything back in my bag and he turned the passport over to me and he said, “Welcome home, Mr. Reston” and I absolutely burst into tears in the middle of the San Francisco airport. Just absolutely uncontrollable sobs. So, I was back in my home country again.

Q: Well, we'll pick this up, I put at the end here where we are so we know where to pick it up.

RESTON: Good.

Q: I would like to talk a little about some of your impressions of Vietnam.

RESTON: Yes.

Q: You came back, when were you back?

RESTON: 1970. The beginning of 1970, the end of the winter.

Q: Okay, good. Well, we'll pick it up then.

RESTON: Fine.

Q: Today is the 20th of June, 2005. Tom, let's go back to Vietnam. You were there when?

RESTON: I was there for about two months in December of '69 and January of 1970. That was at the time that the Vietnamization program was going full force. We were, or the Nixon Administration was, trying to turn more and more of the duties of security and nation-building over to the Vietnamese and trying to extricate itself, behind that fa#ade.

Q: In the first place you were a stringer at least for the paper. The place was full of stringers as I recall. While you were there I was consul general there. We had a lot of trouble because every once in a while there would be a demonstration and the so-called newspapermen would put on their appropriate armbands and get up and throw rocks at the police and stuff like that. I mean it wasn't to put it mildly, it wasn't a very disciplined group of journalists. How did you fit within this?

RESTON: First of all, I think, I was legitimate in that I was there to — I mean my principle place where I published my articles on this whole trip was with the Boston Globe and from there it was syndicated. It was syndicated through something called the North American Newspaper Alliance. While I had, before I went to Vietnam, I had very strong political views about American policy in Vietnam, I nevertheless considered the kind of work that I was doing was straight reporting and it was not at all aimed at making a point, a political point. I had been so consumed when I was in college and out doing my politics with the Vietnam War that I really wanted to see it first-hand. That was my personal reason for being there. I had a fascinating couple of months there that very intense. I was not an activist in any sense while I was there.

Q: Okay, well, tell me what were you seeing?

RESTON: Well, I tell you, I spent a great deal of my time with a guy named Jim Sterba who was in the New York Times bureau in Saigon at the time and I had known Jim before he went to Vietnam and when I got to Saigon I needed a place to stay and I stayed with Jim in his apartment. He at the time was doing an article for the New York Times Magazine about what it was like to be a grunt, or a line soldier on the front lines out in the bush in Vietnam. He was not doing a story about policy or anything. He just wanted to try to convey to his readership what the life and thoughts of that person were, and I'm not talking about officers or anything. I'm talking about people who are really out, as they said, “humping the bush.” I just tagged along with him for about a month. In those days the military was very good to the journalists. When I went to Saigon I registered as a journalist. I was given the equivalent of a rank of major, as I recall, on my credentials, and I had access to obviously a lot of high-level military people, but I also had access to transportation, and that was critical.

Q: You had to have helicopters to go from hither to yon and also Air America.

RESTON: Yes. I made maximum use of that and the whole time that I was in, the two months I was in Vietnam, I was not a great deal in Saigon. I was just constantly traveling in the provinces. One thing that happened to me during Vietnam was that I don't think it really changed my political opinions about the war so much, but psychologically I began to identify more and more with the American troops there and the difficulty they found themselves in, so that while I might not have been thrilled about the American military before I got to Vietnam, I think that I emerged from Vietnam with an enormous respect and a great respect for the soldiers doing the job there and a profound closeness to them because in many situations I was in, they were my protectors. I was out in places which you could have been killed at any moment.

Q: Where were you, can you name some of the places you got involved; did you go out on patrols or sweeps?

RESTON: Yes I did. I really was all over the country, from the extreme north in I CORPS up with the marines in I CORPS near the North Vietnamese border all the way down to, I guess IV CORPS it was in the Delta in the south and I did go out on patrols with troops. I visited a lot of these little fire bases, you know, where they'd be up on top of a hill in a kind of fortification, and from out of there they would go through the bush and then come back in, and obviously the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong were always trying to overrun these little fortified hilltop bases. When I was in some of them, they were under attack. I don't think I was ever particularly in danger of getting shot, but there was a lot of action very close to me and I used to go up in choppers, the command and control choppers, I guess, at night, that were directing engagements right on the ground underneath us, 5,000 feet below us. I had never been in a war zone before, and for people who haven't actually been in such a situation, it is a different kind of emotion, and it's entirely different from thinking at your leisure back home in safety about what should be done.

Q: Did you get any feel about the Vietnamization, the South Vietnamese government?

RESTON: I certainly, when I was there in '69 and '70 just at the turn of the year, I got the impression that, I mean, one impression was that it certainly was happening. I mean, I thought the Americans were getting out, were, I wouldn't say desperate to get out, because they weren't at that stage yet, but they were getting out, although we still had almost 500,000 men on the ground at that time. It was happening, but it was just beginning to happen. I didn't know, I guess I kind of assumed that it would collapse, the closer we got to our final withdrawal. What actually happened did not surprise me a great deal by the time it did happen.

Q: What about, how did you find, did you have much interface or whatever you want to call it with the other reporters? How did you see them?

RESTON: I did. Mainly when I was in Saigon I used to go to that 5:00 follies that they had in Vietnam where the spokesman would be doing a daily briefing for the press about the

activities and engagements of the day and the progress that the military felt it was making on the ground and the casualties that were being reported. They were by then, the press corps, I think, profoundly cynical about the whole thing and did not think it was going to be ultimately successful, the American effort. It was a little bit beyond the high-glory days of journalists as hero, who kind of had the bravery to expose the flaws of the policy early-on. It was a little bit past the Halberstam days.

Q: Well, then you came back in 1970 and then what?

RESTON: Came back in 1970 and I returned to a world that I had been in on-and-off for many years before that and that was the world of domestic politics. I went, well, I went to work for the governor of Maryland, who was then Marvin Mandel, as a speechwriter in the governor's office in Annapolis. I had never worked for a government before. That was the first time I had ever seen, I had seen lots of politics and campaigning and the kind of logistics of trying to mobilize people and to seize, not seize power, but to win elections, but I had never worked in the substance of what a government does. I spent oh, about eight months in Annapolis, I suppose, and I also did a campaign in Virginia. I was the manager of a congressional campaign in Tidewater, Virginia for a man named Joe Fitzpatrick running against a Republican incumbent. We lost that race very badly. We spent like $12,000 to run that campaign, which was an extraordinary figure of money when you think about what is being spent these days on elections. Anyway it was the first time I had actually managed a big campaign for office. Tidewater Virginia — Norfolk, Portsmouth, Virginia Beach, Hampton, Newport News — that was where my political roots in the state really turned out to be, although I was from Northern Virginia. I subsequently did a lot of politics in Virginia.

Q: This is what the 1972 campaign?

RESTON: No, this was before. This was 1970.

Q: You talked before about Virginia politics and the Byrd machine. How did you find Virginia politics at this point?

RESTON: Virginia was changing in those days. Virginia had been run ever since the 1920s by an organization, the Byrd Machine that was a very powerful organization. It had an iron-clad control over the state for years. They believed in clean government, good government, fiscally responsible government. They did not believe in borrowing any money. The state did not borrow any money or take on any debt under the Byrd Machine and that was true when I got involved in politics there. They did a great many good things, but in my judgment they did a great many bad things. They were segregationists. They had closed the public schools when the schools were ordered to be integrated. They did not believe in allowing public participation in government, that is to say, they did not permit black people to vote, and they did not really want white people voting either. The genius of the Byrd Machine was to control the electorate to such an extent that it would be so tiny that it would be controllable.

Q: By 1970 what was happening?

RESTON: It was beginning to break down. It began to break down in about the mid-1960s, but it was still entrenched in power. When I started to come along, well, for the first time in 1966, and then in 1970, and then I was active in politics in Virginia — very active — between 1970 and when I joined the State Department in 1977. We were the people who were insurgents we were kind of gnawing at the ankles of the Byrd Machine and trying to dislodge them from their local positions of power and dislodge them as best we could from the legislature. I was deeply involved in all of those efforts during that seven-year period. By the end of that seven-year period most of the Byrd people had either retired from politics or had left the Democratic party and had become independents or they had left the party and become Republicans. The state was actually by the mid-1970s in political

disarray, that is to say there was no real center of power. It was a game that was kind of up for grabs. It was very fluid.

Q: The eight months you spent in Annapolis, how did you find Maryland politics, can you compare and contrast?

RESTON: Yes, although they're adjacent states; the politics were 180 degrees opposite from Virginia. Maryland is not a Southern state as Virginia is. It's a border state, but it has got one city, which is a big traditional city, which dominates it, in those days it, did: Baltimore. There is a lot of real old-fashioned machine politics in Maryland that would be recognizable by any Democratic Party official from Chicago. We didn't have hardly any of that kind of brass-collar Democrat, old kind of 19th Century machine politics based on getting lots of people getting to vote and overwhelming the opposition by numbers. That's what they did in urban Maryland. Then the rural areas of Maryland were, some of them were, very long-ago and far away like the rural areas of Virginia. It is far from a state being in disarray politically with no center of gravity. That state was controlled by the Democratic Party and the party was largely controlled by the governor. In 1968 the entire state delegation to a national convention was personally chosen by the governor. That was the process by which they chose their people to go to a national political convention. It was highly centralized, highly efficient. It was dirty and crooked, unlike Virginia, which was clean. There was no financial impropriety in Virginia politics in those days whereas, then and now, there was quite a bit in Maryland.

Q: Well, how about Governor Mandel? How did you see him?

RESTON: Marvin Mandel was his name and first of all I saw a lot of him on not a daily basis, but I suppose I saw him three or four times a week. He was quiet, restrained. He was a real back-corridor politician. He was not good in public. He was not inspirational, but the one thing that he knew how to do was to operate this system. He knew how to control his legislature. He knew how to get things passed in the House of Delegates and

the State Senate, and he did it. The government was very efficiently and traditionally run. Now, Marvin Mandel went to prison because of financial improprieties and bribe-taking and the idea that a governor of Virginia should go to prison for taking bribes would have just been unthinkable, but Governor Mandel did and so it was a very different can of worms, although it was right next door to the state that I knew best.

Q: In Maryland at the time what was the attitude power of the state blacks?

RESTON: They were concentrated in the political machine in Baltimore. They were beginning to remove from the District of Columbia in huge numbers and settling in Prince George County, a traditionally white suburb of Washington so that in Prince George County you could begin to see it was just a very populous and big jurisdiction, but one that was changing from one dominated by a traditional white power structure into one that was going to be dominated by a black power structure. They were part of the political machine. There was a place for them in the political machine just the way there was a place for Poles and the Eastern Europeans in Baltimore City and people of that extraction. They were kind of full partners in a real old-fashioned and arguably crooked political machine.

Q: Were you there at the time they tried to amend, come up with a new constitution? It got blown out of the water by the gun people or not?

RESTON: I don't think so. I forget which year. I vaguely remember that sort of controversy, but that was not happening when I was there. I don't think it was a very modern constitution when I was there and the reality of it was that it was not, they were not big believers in open politics in Maryland except in places like Montgomery County to the north of Washington. They were good government, clean issues oriented people, but they didn't really count for very much in the real game that was afoot.

Q: Going back to Virginia, what were you, sort of a professional gun on running campaigns by this time?

RESTON: I was in 1970, I suppose. I had been involved in a number of political campaigns and a Senate campaign in Virginia in 1966 in which we beat the Byrd Machine for the first time in a statewide campaign in Virginia, and dislodged the Democratic Senator Willis Robertson who was Chairman of the Banking and Currency Committee in the Senate in DC. In 1972, Virginia had its mass meetings and state political convention late in the delegate selection process and while Virginia is an intensively conservative state, by the time Virginia selected its delegates to go to the Miami convention the whole center of the party nationally had collapsed. People who were allied behind moderate politicians such as Edmund Muskie for president in 1972, they had really been wiped away, and by the time Virginia came along, the McGovern forces, which were on the left of the party with McGovern an anti-war figure, had really, it was clear he was going to get the nomination, and what happened on a local level was that the moderates in the state party structures were being swept away. In 1972 at the Democratic state convention, the liberals took over the party and we, or I, was a liberal, at least for that particular moment, I'd been on very different sides depending on the campaign in Virginia, but then I was identified on the left of the party. A liberal became Chairman of the state Democratic Party. He was my mentor in Virginia politics. He arranged for the state convention to elect me as secretary of the state Democratic party, so I became not only kind of just a chronic campaigner, but I had a post in the party structure, the statewide party structure, and held that post for four years and was reelected to it in 1976 at the Democratic state convention. For those four years, I was involved in trying to rescue what remained of the Democratic party in Virginia for that period, which was not very much, because so many of the conservatives had left the party, and a lot more left the party as a result of the election people like me and my friends to party leadership posts.

Q: Well, was there concern at the time that you were going to return Virginia to a Republican state.

RESTON: Sure. I remember the morning after we were elected at the state convention, it was in Salem, Virginia, outside Roanoke in that year of 1972. I was instructed by the new chairman of the party to go immediately to Richmond and to put a hold on the name of the Democratic State Central Committee with the State Corporation Commission because we were hearing rumors that people were going to claim that we were not the real Democratic Party of Virginia. You could tell just by virtue of just even coming up with the idea that we should try to put a hold on the name at the State Corporation Commission that we were deeply defensive. We realized that we were kind of a fish out of water and we would have a four year effort to try to convince people that we weren't as bad as they were saying that we were. Yes, there was a great concern that was a result of the election of people that were “too far on the left,” although liberals in Virginia are not very far on the left, and certainly the people I was associated with were people who wanted to win elections and didn't really have an ideology, was not the highest thing on their priority list. A lot of people left the party. The Republicans did indeed take over more and more of local government posts in the counties and cities of Virginia. It was just at that time when the first Republican numbers were becoming visible in the state legislatures. There was an independent who was governor during that time, Mills Godwin, who had been a Democratic governor. Then for the first time a Republican was elected governor in 1969, the first time since Reconstruction. He was a rather odd Republican, but you could see it beginning to...

Q: Who was that?

RESTON: Linwood Holton was his name, but he was not, he was a traditional, he was one of the so-called Mountain-Valley Boys from the Shenandoah Valley or from the mountains of Southwest Virginia. The people who had been Republicans in the wake of the Civil War or at the time of the Civil War did not agree with the Secession and maintained a kind of a highly antipathetic stance towards the Democratic power structure in the rest of the state. The people who ultimately gained control of the state were the former Democrats who indeed were the Byrd Machine people who had become Republicans, but they were the

sort of the same people that traditional Republicans had been fighting against, for decades and decades.

Q: What about Northern Virginia? Was this in the '70s, was this becoming a cohesive hunk of political life or not?

RESTON: I saw this kind of on a daily basis while I was Secretary of the State Democratic Party. I lived in Fairfax County in McLean just across the river from Washington, D.C. My political roots, as I said a moment ago, were in Tidewater, Virginia. One of the great political fault lines in Virginia politics in those days was a power struggle between the down-state interests with traditional interests, and the growing population centers north of the Rappahannock River in Northern Virginia. The powers that be in the legislature had always done their best to control the influence of Northern Virginia because it was just a completely different kettle of fish up here in Northern Virginia than they were in Richmond or Tidewater or Southside Virginia. They did not speak the same political language at all, so that it was an awkward time for me because I was a Northern Virginian and yet I was loyal to this machine guy who had taken over the party who really was a down-state person. What ultimately happened was that Northern Virginia became so populous that it, that was the end of this political struggle. Now I don't know what the figures are, but in my day it was probably a quarter of the legislature and now by the time I left it was probably a third of the legislature in terms of numbers of seats. It exerts a great influence now which it did not when I was there. It's a completely different crowd of people. They are, up here, the party people, are very substantive, they're called “goo-goos,” good government people, and they care what the government should be doing. Other places in Virginia they don't care so much what the government does. They care who's in charge.

Q: Did you get any feel for the relationship in the national Democratic Party and the Virginia Democratic party?

RESTON: Yes, I think the national Democrats really didn't care so much about what was happening in Virginia because they perceived correctly that the state was intrinsically conservative and that outside extremely unusual conditions the Republicans were going to carry Virginia in national political elections. There was never much attention paid to it by the chairman of the national chairman, for instance. It was kind of just written off. We didn't have very many candidates for presidents visiting Virginia. Now that would change every once in a while as it did in 1976 when Jimmy Carter ran for president as a Democrat and as a southerner and carried the South except for Virginia. We lost Virginia by 20,000 votes in 1976, but we were the only state of the Confederacy that did not go for him.

Q: This is sort of moving on and into the Carter thing, did you get involved in that?

RESTON: Yes, I did. As I said I was Secretary of the State Democratic Party at that time and the national party was interested in what Virginia was going to do. Certainly Jimmy Carter was interested in what Virginia was going to do. He considered that it should have been his sort of state and that he should have been able to carry it. He should have been able to get a large chunk of the delegation to the national convention. The problem I had from where I was sitting was that my chairman of the party didn't like Jimmy Carter and first started out supporting, who was it? Was it Lloyd Benson that he supported in 1976? Yes, I think it was Lloyd Benson and he didn't go anywhere. Then he supported Hubert Humphrey who was unfortunately dying at the time and did not prove to be strong enough to stand up to Jimmy Carter. Then there was this back-corridor struggle to see which way Virginia would go. I said to my chairman, really it doesn't matter who you would prefer to see president at this time. You're a politician, it should be clear to you that Carter is going to get the nomination and if you continue to oppose him it won't sit very well for you personally or for Virginia where we'll get a bad reputation here unless we can become more sympathetic to the person who is clearly going to be our nominee. Carter campaigned quite a bit in Virginia leading up to the convention and after the convention. He actually began his fall campaign in Norfolk, Virginia. I used to see him when he came

through the state. I used to ride on planes with him, just the two of us sitting there on a plane just talking about politics and about Virginia and I'd see him at rallies and different places in the state as I would other political candidates for president, but we used to see a great deal of him in those days.

Q: What was your impression of Carter?

RESTON: He was odd for politics. He was not the kind of politician I was used to meeting. He was much more “serious” than most of the politicians I had met. He was very concerned with doing the right thing, getting the right answer, the right substantive answer to a problem. A lot of politicians want to get the best answer that they can and make it work, but Carter really wanted to see what was the best answer and let's try to do the thing that we ought to do that's best. That was kind of an oddity for me. He was religious. That was not necessarily an oddity for me, although I'm not a church-going person, but he wore it on his sleeve. I'd met many people who wear it on their sleeve, but in those days it was not a usual thing in politics.

Q: What about say Virginia politics were getting more religious all the time at least religious identifiers. One thinks of the South as being particularly prone to religiosity in politics or whatever you want to call it. Were you seeing that?

RESTON: No, that was really before, certainly Carter was a deeply religious person and he, I don't think anybody questions the sincerity of his political of his religious beliefs nor the kind of the way that he tried to and succeeded at bringing his religious views to bear on various political questions such as in the foreign policy arena, the whole question of human rights which was very important to him. I think that was really based on his religious faith. It was before the time when politicians, having seen the example of Jimmy Carter said, well, you know if we can figure out a way to marry in a cynical way, if we can figure out a way to marry religious faith with political mobilization that there's a formula there that can be quite powerful. Carter was not that sort of person. He knew that he was benefiting

from that, but it wasn't a cynical. I saw Chief of Staff to Jimmy Carter, Jack Watson, the day I left Atlanta, three days before the election, and he said what's going to happen in Virginia, and I said we're going to lose it by 20,000 votes. We lost it by 19,000 votes. We had a pretty good handle on what was going to happen in Virginia, but the state as we were talking about before was just becoming more and more Republican and it was more and more difficult for a political force to hold it together. There's so many different parts of Virginia. The coalfields of Southwest Virginia are just worlds away from Northern Virginia culturally. We lost it, but Carter won the election.

Q: Was there anything that Carter could have done did you feel that might have?

RESTON: I still have dreams about well, what could we have done. When you get that close you wake up at night saying if only we had done this or that. I don't know. It's so long ago now. I don't know. It's a big state. There are a lot of people in Virginia and 20,000 votes are not very many votes so doubtless that there was something that we could have done to join virtually the entire rest of the South.

Q: Well, then what happened after the '76 election?

RESTON: I should take a step back first. I had been working in a law firm in Washington, DC which I began to work in right after I got out of law school. Remember, I spent three years in Charlottesville at the University of Virginia as a law student. I was Secretary of the State Democratic Party at the time, but what I was really doing was learning the law in Charlottesville. After I got out of law school I went to a big Washington law firm called Hogan and Hartson which I think now is the largest law firm in Washington if I'm not mistaken. It was one of the two or three biggest then. I was doing, they had a section of that firm which was doing largely pro-bono, public-interest, civil-rights law. Although I did anti-trust and litigation and other kinds of law while I was there I did a great deal of civil rights pro-bono law, particularly my main client during those years was the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, or MALDEF, as the acronym is. MALDEF

wanted to have Texas and other parts of the Southwest covered under the Voting Rights Act. The Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965, but when it was, Johnson very carefully arranged for the trigger of the act which would decide where it would apply, that it would apply all over the deep South, but it would not apply in Texas, because while he thought it was good medicine for other Southerners, he wanted to see that his colleagues would be able to arrange things to their liking in Texas. The act went into effect for 10 years and then there was a negotiation between the Nixon administration and the black civil rights leadership in Washington. The blacks agreed that they would not ask for any changes in the law, including the trigger of the law, and the Nixon people said, well, we'll extend it for another 10 years. That was the gentlemen's understanding. When the Latinos came along and said, hey, wait we've got problems in Texas and Arizona, New Mexico and other places in the Southwest and parts of California, where we need help to block the gerrymandering and block the bad practices of these local governments which denied people the right to vote, the black and traditional leadership of kind of the whole civil rights “lobbying” coalition in Washington just froze the Latinos out.

Well, my job at the law firm of Hogan and Hartson was that I was working for MALDEF in an attempt to break the deal that the blacks had made with the Nixon administration and to get Texas and California, New Mexico and Arizona covered under the Voting Rights Act. We succeeded in doing that and it caused a major split in the civil rights community in Washington, D.C. and a lot of resentment between the blacks and the browns in the coalition. I had been doing all that as I was also doing my political work in Virginia. Then in the summer immediately after Carter was nominated for president I was asked to go to work, not on the Carter campaign, but Governor Carter instituted a so-called transition team before the election, of 20 people, to essentially decide the question of well, what do we do if we win? How do we organize the government? How do we choose the cabinet? How do we choose the subcabinet? What problems should a Carter administration be pushing in the environment and foreign policy and you know, what would the beginnings of the Carter legislative program be, if he were to be elected president? It was a delicacy,

obviously, because it could be construed, if it became too public, that it was an act of arrogance, because after all the people are supposed to decide who is going to become president.

In any event he felt that in past governments that it was kind of by-gosh and by-golly and they had 90 days to get ready and it wasn't enough time and that he wanted to be more thoughtful about it and thought the nation would be best served if he had a little bit of a running start to do that. Well, I was one of those 20 people. I got involved, I left my law firm in August of 1976 right after the Democratic convention and I went to Atlanta and worked on this effort. Then after we won I returned to Washington and I was put on the transition team for the State Department. We were dealing with the end of the Kissinger era and the takeover of the Democrats at the State Department and I was involved in that effort.

Q: Well, while you were on the pre-election transition team what piece of the pie were you more or less given?

RESTON: I was mainly working on personnel questions. How do you choose the cabinet? To what extent should the cabinet itself choose the subcabinet or to what extent should the White House be choosing the subcabinet, the assistant secretaries of State or the deputy assistant attorneys general in the Justice Department? Should that be a White House thing or should it be essentially the prerogative of the Secretary of State or the Attorney General? Coming up with lists of possible Undersecretaries of State, coming up with a list of, say, eight people for Assistant Secretary of State for Middle Eastern Affairs and calling people, saying, you know, well, I was calling once we had won the election. I had lists of jobs at the State Department that, because the essential decision was made very early on that choosing the subcabinet posts in the Carter administration was largely going to be left to the cabinet secretaries and that the White House, while it would have things to say about that every once in a while, really wanted the cabinet secretaries to call those shots because it thought it would make more efficiently running government. I think that was a bad mistake on the part of the Carter Administration, but anyway that was

their decision. It was ultimately for the president to decide who the assistant secretary for Latin America should be at the State Department. I put together briefing books for him of say eight candidates for the assistant secretary of State for ARA, Latin American affairs, and here the eight candidates would be, and I came up with those eight candidates or six candidates or whatever it would be, essentially in consultation with the political people in the White House or what was to become the White House, and largely from the transition team which was headed by Tony Lake for the State Department. For each one of these candidates I would have called a whole bunch of traditional foreign policy and political people and gotten their views, and rather bald views, about the merits or demerits of these candidates.

Q: Why did you feel letting cabinet secretaries choose their underlings was catastrophic. I mean one would think for efficiency you would expect an undersecretary of Commerce or what have you to choose people from within that and get technical expertise and have a better running place.

RESTON: You would think so and you know in many cases that happened exactly the way it should have happened. It did make the agencies more collegial, more smoothly running, but what it did not do, it did not make the subcabinet leaders of the departments particularly loyal to the White House and its program. It made them loyal to their agency and that was the downside. It made them loyal to their cabinet secretary and to their agency and, in the tug-and-pull of Washington, that doesn't necessarily mean that their first loyalty was to the president. That's why I think it was — I said catastrophic, that would be way overblown. I think it was a decision of good will on the part of Carter. I think it did make for more efficient and smoother running government in some respects, but it resulted in a lack of loyalty to the president in some instances. I would have done it much more a mixture between the White House and the cabinet secretaries than it was. I mean that would have been a better mix than it turned out to be.

Q: Well, you were on the transition team?

RESTON: Yes.

Q: What was the attitude? Sometimes you get administrations that come in and look at the State Department and say you've got a bunch of people who gave away the store or they didn't know what they were doing. What would you say was the Carter attitude?

RESTON: Well, you had a State Department which maybe was unusual vis-#-vis sister institutions in the government. It was run by an extremely intelligent, strategic boss, Henry Kissinger, who had in many respects been a brilliant Secretary of State and national security advisor for the Nixon-Ford people until the election of 1976. You had a Kissinger who had been entrenched in power at the State Department for quite a while under two presidents before the Democrats took control of the executive branch so that the career Foreign Service had become used to Kissinger and the way things had been done under Kissinger. I was perceived as a, you know, I ultimately was a political appointee in the State Department. I perceived that the initial attitude of the career Foreign Service toward the incoming Carter people was that they didn't do it the way Henry did it. There was a lot of loose talk about how the Carter people were not very sophisticated in foreign policy. They did not believe, or they said they did not believe, in doing things in a traditional manner in foreign affairs. They were interested in all kinds of questions and issues, which would have been regarded as, I think, childish by some of the Nixon and Ford people and Kissinger people in the Department. So, it was not a happy prospect of the two groups of people looking at each other before the State Department had a chance to start working.

Carter people, on the other hand, came in feeling, I think, defensive about the State Department, suspicious of the State Department because they were suspicious of Kissinger. They could feel the sense of we're the ones who know how to make it work. We're the sophisticated ones and you really are pikers compared to us. It just was, initially at least, it was not a happy feeling. Now obviously I'm overstating this because there are thousands of people in the Foreign Service. I know personally that there were many of them who were delighted that the Democrats had come in. Were delighted that Carter

was there. Were delighted that Kissinger and his colleagues were leaving, but generally I think there was an uneasy feeling between the groups of people at the beginning of the Carter Administration, and indeed at the end of the Carter Administration, but certainly in the beginning.

Q: Were you picking up while you were working at the State Department a concern about Brzezinski? Was he going to sort of replicate the Kissinger thing with the power of foreign affairs that you had in the NSC?

RESTON: I chuckle because, for better or worse, this became a great deal of the stock-in-trade of the people around Vance at the State Department and around Brzezinski at the National Security Council. It was a political fault line within the administration. There were not so many struggles between State and Defense as there often are in other administrations. There weren't so many struggles between the CIA and the State Department as there were, as there have been, in other administrations, but the great internal political struggles tended to revolve around NSC and State and Brzezinski and Vance and obviously their colleagues. Sometimes I think they thought that it was their role to be especially energetic in this particular series of fights which developed rather early in the administration and went through virtually until the time when Vance resigned from the administration. I mean, yes, is the answer. The short answer to your question is yes. We picked that up very soon and we were quite conscious of it. All the way through while I was in the government I was very conscious of it.

Q: Did you have any feel about the Foreign Service. Was this sort of a group you had to be dealt with and I don't want to say the enemy, but a foreign power or was there a cohesive Foreign Service?

RESTON: You know we've been talking for a number of, for a couple of hours here, about where I came from before I came to work in the State Department and, as you can see, I was not a foreign policy expert. I did know something about the world. I had, I

think, a good respect for the Foreign Service at the time that I came to work at the State Department, but I didn't have any particular knowledge of it as a, I had never dealt with it on a day-to-day basis as I began to constantly, once I arrived at the State Department. I think that what was my attitude, my attitude was well, I have a basic respect for the Foreign Service. I realized that I don't understand the Foreign Service. I realized that somehow I needed to learn about the Foreign Service in order to do my job. I believed that I was going to be good at learning about the Foreign Service because I said to myself this is a political operation over here. It's politics by another name and I've been in politics all my life so this is something I should instinctively, maybe not easily, but it shouldn't be beyond my capability of learning how this works. Those were my thoughts. You've got to also understand I was very young to do my job.

Q: How old were you then?

RESTON: I had just turned 30 and I think I was the youngest Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the State Department. There may have been one who was a couple of years younger than me, Brian Atwood. I was “too young”, quote unquote. I probably was too young to do my job. I certainly think that a lot of people in the Foreign Service thought I was too young. I thought I was too young in many respects, but I thought, by golly, I'm going to learn about it. Those were my attitudes right at the beginning and it was a constant learning thing for me for the three-and-a-half years that I was there. I emerged at the end, I think, with even more respect for the Foreign Service than I had going in because I had gotten to know them and I found them much more difficult to understand than I thought I was going to. I had a lot more trouble learning about them than I thought I was going to.

Q: What were some of the things that you found you had to learn about?

RESTON: I had to try to learn what they believed in. The hardest part of my job was getting a straight answer out of a Foreign Service Officer and I had access to all of them.

I had a very unusual job in the State Department in that anybody I wanted to talk to had to talk to me instantly. I didn't make telephone calls in the State Department where people had to call me back if I told them I needed to speak to them right away. That was from the Secretary of State on down. I got to know a lot of the Foreign Service while I was there, in very pressured situations, highly embarrassing to the Foreign Service and I think every time a Foreign Service Officer received a telephone call from me it was probably received with some trepidatiothat a phone call from Reston or Hodding Carter could conceivably mean trouble, that something had turned up that was going to be a problem, an embarrassment. It could be dangerous to that individual if it wasn't handled carefully, and so those were some of the sorts of circumstances that I dealt with.

Now, I said a moment ago, that the hardest part of my job was getting a straight answer out of a Foreign Service Officer. I recognized that about halfway through the job I had. It wasn't as hard to deal with the White House or it wasn't as hard to deal with the press, but dealing with the Foreign Service for me was hard. Just to give you an example. There was an assassination in Lebanon one day and we received this news early in the morning and early enough in the morning for me to try to get a handle on what I should be saying about it at noon. One of the first things I did that day was to call the head of the Lebanon desk and say I would like you to come to my office right away and bring a map. This is an assassination of a Christian by another Christian and my understanding of Lebanese politics is shaky enough that I don't understand why Christians should be killing Christians, so I would like you to come up here right away with a big map of Lebanon and explain to me why this sort of thing is happening, what you think our interests are, the American government's interests, and what you think might happen as a result of this assassination. He appeared. I used to go through this exercise constantly while I was there. This was one of the reasons why it was a fabulous job for me, why I learned so much. You would say to the guy, “okay, Larry” it was Larry Pope on the Lebanon desk in those days, “what will happen as a result of this assassination? What will be happening a month from now?”

“Well, on the one hand this and on the other hand that.” And it was all very smooth, and I don't mean to attack Larry because I have great respect for Larry Pope.

Q: He was a vice consul in Saigon.

RESTON: Was he?

Q: It was his first job when he worked for me, yes.

RESTON: Really? Well, I like him a lot and have a lot of respect for him, but I'd typed him just perhaps unfairly as an example of what I perceived to be a problem. Well, it was on the one hand this and on the other hand that. We think that maybe this is what will happen, but we could be wrong because something else might influence so that it was hard to get, or I believed that it was hard to get, a straight answer out of him. Now, there were good and sufficient reasons why it was hard to get a straight answer because these are complicated questions. In fact we didn't know what was going to happen as a result of the assassination. But many in the Foreign Service were reluctant to tip their hats about what they really believed, were reluctant to tell you what they really believed, because they perceived, well, maybe I might get in trouble if I call it the wrong way. It made my job more difficult because I needed their speculation as to what was really happening, not because I was going to go out and tell the world that this was a terrible thing and a month from now the implications of this are going to be enormous, and I suppose that this might happen. I would have been a fool to say all that, although many in the Foreign Service were quite unsophisticated about people in my job, and really did believe that whatever I was told by them on the Bolivia desk, I would simply turn around and tell the Los Angeles Times. Well, that would have been unthinkable in my job, but the Foreign Service wasn't sophisticated enough to realize that I wasn't a mere transmission belt to say publicly, you know, what they had been telling me internally. I had a hard time getting true answers out of the Foreign Service.

Q: In the first place, you might explain what your title was and what your job was.

RESTON: Yes, maybe we should go back to that. I had two titles at the State Department. I was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Deputy Spokesman of the Department. Maybe I should step back for a moment and tell you how at least I think I got my job or my jobs and then at some point during our conversation I should probably tell you what my day was like, or what a spokesman's day was like.

Q: Yes.

RESTON: As I said I was on the transition team for the State Department and very much involved in the mechanism of choosing the subcabinet and the cabinet and I was all involved in briefing the president with briefing books or the president-elect with briefing books about who should be the Secretary of State. Then once Vance was chosen I was involved in briefing the White House and Vance about the candidates for the subcabinet posts in the State Department. I had for many years through newspapering and through politics and through civil rights been a friend of Hodding Carter who ultimately became the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and was Spokesman of the Department. Because I was a friend of Hodding's and knew him very well and had enormous respect for him — I wasn't running the world or the government — but I certainly was bringing him to the attention of the people at the White House in a very favorable light with the thought that he had been not only a loyal worker for Jimmy Carter's election in 1976, but that many people seemed to be very impressed with Hodding for good and sufficient reasons. In any event Hodding said to me during that process, well, why don't you come over and join me and what would you like to do? I've got I think three deputy slots available. In the old days before we got there, there was a bureau of public affairs, which handled, it was sort of, I used to like to say, they were the American desk of the State Department. They handled the political, well, I wouldn't even glorify it by saying the political relations with the United States. They handled the speech-making by Department officials to go out into Chicago and Des Moines and speak and that sort of thing about American foreign policy. They

handled the historians bureau which was at that time the biggest, the historians office was the biggest office in the Bureau of Public Affairs. They did not under Kissinger have the function of the Spokesman of the Department. That was handled separately and directly under the Secretary since Kissinger seemed to be unusually concerned with his public image and what was said publicly by the American government or the State Department.

When Hodding came in and was asked to be Assistant Secretary of State, he said, well, I would like to do that, but I would like to see that the Spokesman's job is included within the bureau of public affairs. That essentially is a political question. These are kind of my speculations. I mean it turned the bureau of public affairs from being one of the least powerful bureaus in the Department, in a single stroke, it became one of the most powerful bureaus in the Department because the way things work in Washington, as people who have been on the inside know, is that access means a great deal, has a great deal to do with power, if you're doing your job in a reasonably competent way, so that, in any event, before we got there, probably the assistant secretary of public affairs was not seeing the secretary all that often. When we got there Hodding was seeing him five or six times a day, and whenever he wanted to, essentially. Or traveling with him, and as I was, when Hodding didn't want to do it. Hodding said, well, I've got these three deputy slots here. One is for the press and one is for most of the bureau which is the historians office and then there was another one, I forget what, kind of arranging speaking tours for Department officials. He said, which one would you like? You can have whatever you want. I said, well, I want the deputy's job doing the press thing because I thought that was more significant. I liked the press corps. I wanted to learn about American foreign policy while I was in this job with the government and I felt that if I were doing the press, the deputy spokesman's, job, I would be learning more about foreign policy because everyday would be a disaster of some sort and it would be a disaster in Bolivia or it would be a disaster in China or wherever, but at any rate after you had been there for three or four years you'd know something about Bolivian politics or you would know something about traditional American

relations with Australia or you would know a lot, that was true. Anyway, I chose that. It went through after a considerable struggle with the Foreign Service.

Q: What were they looking for one of their own?

RESTON: Well, they certainly weren't looking for the former Secretary of the Democratic Party of Virginia who was 30 years old. I think I can reasonably, I think you can rely on me for that statement. I think they were, you know, I don't know whether they were looking for someone else, but they were not looking for me and although it was all cleared with the Secretary of State by the middle of January that this was what should happen, it seemed to take quite a while for me to get all my clearances and to get on the payroll and to finish up with the investigations, so much so, that I finally went to see one of my friends in the State Department whom I had known for many years. Sol Linowitz, who was our negotiator in the Panama Canal Treaty.

I said to him, well, I've got this problem, what should I do? I said, I can't seem to get on the payroll here. I've been working here for six months, but I can't get on the payroll and I kind of need the money and furthermore it doesn't seem to be quite right if people want me to do this job that I shouldn't be in the job. He said, well, you ought to go see Warren Christopher who is the acting Secretary of State because Vance is out of town and explain your problem and get it dealt with. I saw Linowitz and he said, well, you ought to go see Christopher, with whom I was very close personally, but you ought to wait three or four days to see him. You ought to go tell your colleague who is in charge of helping you get on the payroll that you are about to go see him and that's what I did. I went to one of the other deputy assistant secretaries of State in the public affairs bureau who had been in charge for six months to helping me get on the payroll. I said, look, I've been asking about this for quite a while now and I just, I want you to know that I have made an appointment to see Christopher three days from now and if it is not resolved in three days from now I am going to keep my appointment and tell him what's not been happening here. If you're going to get

the clearances done and make it happen, it needs to happen quickly. In fact it was done in three days. Then I was in my job, officially as well as unofficially.

Q: Did you have any feeling within the State Department, I think back to when the Kennedy administration came in and also the Reagan administration, the other administrations that you have people who worked on the campaign and this is in various departments, I just know about the State Department of some people running around having a great time again quite young not very knowledgeable. There is a certain amount of resignation on the part of the Foreign Service of having this happen for a while and then things sort of sort themselves out. The effective people, I'm talking about political appointees make their mark and all and they all learn to live and work together quite well. There are others who were spending most of their time having, the political appointees who never quite get with it. I mean they're, part of it is just plain arrogance to the young I think. Did you run across that?

RESTON: No, I didn't so much and it surprised me. I expected to find political appointees appointed by the Carter administration who were that sort of person in the State Department and there were one or two of them there. I'm talking about young people my age, but I expected that there would be more than there were, but I think the reason why there weren't so many people like that was that, first of all, Carter, I think, had a great respect for the State Department, in the beginning at least. He felt that he had a great respect for the Foreign Service and did not want to see the Foreign Service unduly muscled around by political appointees. I think it was not so much of a tug-of-war between political appointees and career people during the Carter administration as it often has been in the past.

Q: I have to say when I think about administrations, the ones that come to mind are the Kennedy administration, the Reagan administration, and the Bush II administration, almost like a hostile takeover. I'm sure there have been others. The Carter one doesn't, you know, you can't think of any particular stories.

RESTON: No. I don't think it should register on your radarscope as an administration plagued by those sorts of difficulties or known for those sorts of difficulties. There was a little bit of it, but remarkably little. The second factor that you've got to remember is that he turned a lot of the power over to Vance to put in the subcabinet people. Vance was a very shrewd political operator but he had his own circle, and his world was not the world of somebody who had carried the state of Nebraska for Jimmy Carter. His world was the world of traditional foreign policy, substantive thinkers who had been in and out of government for 20, 30 years by the time he became Secretary of State. He was a serious man. Carter was a serious man and I was working for them and I was really trying to be a serious man. I don't think there was a lot of that kind of cowboy activity. I was not that way although you and I have been talking a lot about my own political background of which I'm very proud, but I certainly felt that I was involved in, I realized immediately I was involved in a different kind of political dynamic there, and I tried to learn it.

Q: Well, coming back to learning to understand the Foreign Service and all. Whenever one thinks of a problem, I'm obviously a Foreign Service Officer, with mainly a consular background, you can't help saying on the one hand and on the other hand because you don't know.

RESTON: Right, I realize that.

Q: What's happened recently has been because of the thought processes which go on in the mind of Saddam Hussein or George Bush and they have nothing to do or very little to do with rationality, but I mean there's an awful lot of that. Did you have the feeling that people that you were dealing with or was it strictly a matter of the good old governmentees were covering your ass or was this looking and saying, well, look it could go this way, it could go that way?

RESTON: As I said a moment earlier in the conversation, I think I entered the Department with a healthy respect for the Foreign Service. I left the Department with an even deeper

respect for them than I had come in with, well founded on the basis of three and a half years of experience with them. I fully realize that there were elements of cover-your-ass, as well as elements of just the view you never do know what's going to happen in Lebanon in a month's time or in Argentina in a month's time. Nevertheless, what I needed in my job as performing the role of Spokesman for the American government, I needed to have as best of a grasp as I could privately as to what political situations were developing. I needed to have very well informed speculation as to why things were happening, or the implications of what was happening in Lebanon, or you pick the country, so that I could in my own mind, I could build a context in which I had to make some very complicated decisions in consultation obviously with many other people. I mean I wasn't making up public positions of the Administration by myself, although sometimes I was, but in consultation with a lot of people I had to perform some very complicated layering make very complicated, layered decisions about what to say. One element of those sorts of complicated decisions involved the political interests of the particular administration I was serving; another of those, the national interest of the nation, another, the interest of our part of the government, which is only part of the government, the interest of people on the ground and in a foreign country where situations were developing that were important for people's safety and their future well being. You had to make these decisions fast because something would happen at 10:00 in the morning and you had to be able to either say something about it, or not say something about it, two hours later. You had to talk to enough people so that you understood the situation. You had a recommendation to make as to what we should be saying about it. You had to have enough self-confidence in yourself to overrule, or to try to overrule, what some assistant secretary might be suggesting that you say. You had to have enough self-confidence so that if you got into a fight with the Assistant Secretary of State for Asia, you could go before the Secretary of State and you could say, well, he can say what he wants. He'll tell you what he thinks about China, but I'm telling you here's what I think, and if you do what he says, you're going to have a big problem tomorrow morning on the front page of the Chicago Tribune that you're not going to want to deal with. I can speculate to you about what that headline

is going to say about the State Department or the American government. These are very subtle questions and complicated questions and I needed help from the Foreign Service in trying to get as clear answers to these questions substantively as I could from them. As I say, it was hard to get, and I had some very probing conversations everyday trying to get those answers.

Q: Well, one looks at situations today where particularly politicians, I mean we had the head of the Senate denying he said something, which he said on TV. You know this is going to come back and I was just wondering its as though some people have a tin ear for what's going to dominate the news. Had you developed in your political work a feel for the press and what would gain attention and what wouldn't?

RESTON: I think so. You've got to remember I came from a newspaper family. My father was a very excellent newspaperman, very serious and he really believed in the role of the press in a functioning republic such as we have here in the United States. That was one part of my formation as a child and as a young adult. I really believed in the role of the press. I had been a newspaperman myself both domestically and as a foreign correspondent. I had been a newspaperman. I had actually done it myself. I knew a lot of people in the press corps personally as friends of mine and I got to the State Department and I was conflicted to a certain extent. Internally, I was thinking, well this is the world I come out of, but I am now being paid by the State Department to talk to those people and through them to the larger world, both inside the United States and beyond. This can be a balancing operation, but the people, I felt a little bit bad about doing it at the beginning of my government service because I kind of came in there with the thought that the guys with the white hats are the press guys and the guys who are kind of struggling just to look good are the people inside the government and yet here I am suddenly on that side of the line, which in those days was a much brighter line than it is these days in 2005. There was a little bit of, in my mind, a little bit of a conflict which after some talks with my boss Hodding Carter I think I was successfully able to resolve in my mind and they didn't really give me too much trouble after that. Hodding sat me down once and he explained, “Look,

you can't have these feelings. What you really are here is more than a spokesman for the State Department or more than a former newspaperman. You are part of a conversation, which happens everyday between the American people and the American government, between the American government and other governments. If you believe in the vitality, the centrality of that conversation happening everyday to the health of the nation, then you're part of that conversation and you can feel good about where you stand as being part of that conversation." That did it for me. I could understand that, and think well, that is a useful work job of work to be done. I should be able to figure out how to be reasonably competent at that, and I was reasonably competent at it by the end. Even in the beginning, I hope I was reasonably competent.

Q: What was your relation and how did you see it as an operative a government official was Hodding Carter?

RESTON: Well, as I say I'd known Hodding for a long time before we came together in the government. I'd known him through the civil rights movement. I'd known him as a newspaperman. I had known him as a Democratic politician, all of which I had been, but he was more senior to me. He was older than I was and he took a more prominent role as a newspaperman and as a politician and as a civil rights leader than I had. I liked him enormously. He was competent, a person of principle. He is, as a human being, he is an absolute glory filled with funny stories and generosity of spirit and he was, it was a profoundly, what's the word, it was kind of a transformative experience to be able to work with him for three and a half years so closely. I adored him personally and I thought he did his job very well and I could see that other people felt that he was doing his job very well. I could see that the Secretary of State trusted him and he had the trust of the press corps and slowly, maybe not so slowly, he developed the trust of the Foreign Service in doing what he did. He was a very good example for me to learn from and I had a very good personal relationship with him.

Q: What was your take initially and as time goes on of the State Department press corps?

RESTON: I think most press corps take on the coloration of the people that they cover and the State Department press corps was no different from that. They were different from a lot of press guys that I had known before. They were much more sophisticated. Much more, they were better informed than other press corps I'd known, that I had worked with in the past. They were quieter, calmer. There wasn't, there weren't a lot of stories about State Department press corps staying up too late and drinking too much bourbon and telling too many cynical stories which in the stereotype and in the reality you could find among many newspapermen, at least in my experience. They were not as much fun as other press corps, but it was a very good press corps and you've got to remember it was not only a domestic U.S. press corps, but it was a press corps that was from all over the world. Each institution was sending its best guy from India to Washington.

Q: Well, so often in our political life you think of the political operators in the White House concentrate, they couldn't care less about what Nippon TV is showing. They wanted to show the president at his best. In a way how did we treat the say the era of the press corps the Japanese press corps?

RESTON: Well, I think it's true. One element in everything that I said was that I was aware that I was a political appointee of that particular administration, so I was looking for opportunities to try to make the President or Secretary of State look good in terms of what I was saying and it was more important to me that the U.S. electorate saw that the President was doing a good job and the Secretary of State was doing a good job than it was for people in India to think he was doing a good job. It's a little bit rude to put it that way, but I think it is true. It resulted in a focus by the government on the American media because being Spokesman of the American government — in the first instance, we saw ourselves as speaking to the American people. Nevertheless I was quite aware, constantly, that I was not only speaking to the American people, but I was speaking to the Indian people as well. I saw that because I was reading, I mean I just take this as an example out of the blue, but I was seeing what was written in the Indian press. I was

seeing what was written on the Indian wires. I was seeing, I spent as much of my time as I felt was appropriate or as I could I was spending time with the foreign press as well. If the Secretary of State was going to go to India I would sit down with the Indian press before he left and I would talk to them about what U.S. policy towards India was, what the purpose of the trip was, what kinds of issues we were hoping to raise with the Indian foreign minister or whoever it was that Vance was going to see while he was in Delhi. Obviously it's delicate work because the kinds of things that we would tend to be raising with the foreign minister quite often would be problems in the relationship. I had to be very careful about how I spoke to the people who were going to speak to the Indian public before the Secretary ever arrived in Delhi.

Q: Now, let's take India as an example. Would you get correspondents from the Delhi Times or something who would come to you and say, Tom, look, this is all very nice, but I'll tell you what we're, when you get to India, I mean this is the issue that is going to dominate or something like that. I mean obviously they should be getting this from our desk and all, but at the same time would you be able to pass on things or say this is a lot more sensitive than I understood or something?

RESTON: Sure, well, in my public post, I had a private persona as well as a public persona. All kinds of press people from the U.S. and from foreign countries I was daily assaulted on a daily basis with what they felt were the problems that American policy was causing and delivered often in the most shrill kind of questioning. If I were sitting down, as I often did if the Secretary was going to go to India and I was going to go with him, I would take the initiative to call in the Indian press sometimes to arrange for some of them to see the Secretary himself, but most often for me to see them before we left Washington. I would tell them from my point of view, that is, the U.S. government's point of view, what we hoped to get out of it or what our conversations were, what we hoped our conversations were going to be like. Now, if I received a storm of questions that I did not expect or if they were telling me things that were different from stuff that the Foreign Service bureaucracy was telling the Secretary — because I was reading the same briefing books that the

Secretary of State was reading before the meeting so I knew what he was going to say and I knew what the Foreign Service thought the problems were — but if I were getting something different from the press corps or different energy or anger in certain parts of the relationship that was not being reflected in the briefing books to the Secretary, you can bet I would be like a bee-shot to the Secretary's office saying, you know, this is what they're telling you in the briefing books, but I've got to tell you, I'm just warning you, I'm picking up that you're going to be faced with an entirely different kind of level of emotion about this particular aspect of the relationship than what the Foreign Service is telling you. I'm telling you now you've got to be thinking of what you're going to tell the foreign minister and you've got to be thinking about how you're going to explain it in public when you step off the airplane. So, yes, I mean I was part of the intelligence gathering, if you will, for the Secretary of State. Part of my job was to forewarn him about problems where he could be blindsided, where the Foreign Service had not briefed him well enough.

Q: I was wondering I didn't know when this was. This was in one of the administrations, one of the spokespersons it probably was the White House, but when asked on, there was an issue dealing with Israel, we said we're going to be neutral in thought, word and deed which came out of I think the book of common prayer.

RESTON: Yes, it does actually.

Q: But, the problem was that the Israelis and the Israeli pressure groups in the United States took this very much to heart and were very negative about being neutral on an issue. Did you ever find yourself caught up in something you said or was the press corps looking for you to slip and playing gotcha or not?

RESTON: I'm not familiar with the particular story that you tell, but it's very, to me it is a very informative story, because...

Q: You might explain what actually happened.

RESTON: I don't know the story, as I say, but to me, let's just assume that somebody did say that. To me, that's a very informative story and reflects a spokesman, first of all, who is too much taken with his own importance by quoting the Book of Common Prayer. That's a kind of a showoff kind of thing to say, that he shouldn't have done. Second of all, it is true that for most of our post-war history, since the formation of the State of Israel, one way to look at our role in the Middle East has been to look at it as an honest broker between Israel and its region and other states in the region. To say that our role is to be neutral in word, thought and deed, does not reflect the complication or richness of the political problem, because we were clearly more than an honest broker. We do have a horse in that race and to emphasize one part of our role instead of another part — unless you know that you're doing it because we wanted to make a political point and it's not the Spokesman who should have been deciding whether we wanted to make a political point. That should have been the President or the Secretary of State making that decision. Let's say it wasn't. Say it's clumsy, and, sure, I was all the time worried about political lobbying groups in the United States who were taking the point of view of the Arabs or the Israelis or whatever, and I knew that if I got too far away from this nuanced, balanced and complicated reality in what I said, that I would get into trouble. That's why all these guys, if they're doing their job, they come out sounding a little mushy because they are factoring in all these things — what the Israelis think, what the people in the United States who are lobbying the government in favor of what the Israelis' think, what the senator from New York thinks, what the, you know, the oil industry thinks, pumping oil elsewhere in the Middle East, you know, the people making the military aircraft. All of these people, all of these things, have got to be factored into what you say, and unless you clearly have been told off to say, to emphasize only one, simplistic side of the role of the U.S. Government, unless you've told off to say it like that, it reflects clumsy judgment, clumsy action on the part of the Spokesman to say something like that.

Q: Did you find that the press was a bit rapacious, is that the term? Looking for you to say something they could jump all over? Could you say, look I misspoke for God's sake, give me some slack or something.

RESTON: I'll tell you, when I was new to the job, I was convinced that that's exactly what was happening and in fact when I was new to the job I think part of the parlor game on part of the press was to see whether they could trap you out in the first several weeks before you didn't know what you were doing and in fact they were generally successful. When I had my first week's briefing there was somebody coming to Washington, somebody coming to New York from North Korea, and I forget just exactly what I said about this visit, but in those days we did not talk to the North Korean government and the policy is different now, but we did not talk to them under any circumstances. I guess the question was would we talk to them and I forget exactly what I said, but I said, well, gee I don't know what, I don't know what the situation is, I'll find out. Well, the implication to saying that is that we are prepared to talk to them because that's entirely different from what any spokesman has ever said before which is that we don't talk to them under any circumstances. The implication could be, well, you know, we're actually getting ready to recognize the North Koreans. Well, they were delighted and I had to a couple of hours later I had to put out a second statement saying the spokesman wishes to reiterate the traditional American position. I mean,, it was embarrassing for me, but I had to get us back on track. I went to see my boss, Hodding Carter, saying oh, gee, I really stepped in it and it was the first week out. He said to me, “Look, the first week I did the briefing I recognized the Palestine Liberation Organization” because it was almost the same thing, I'll see whether we'll talk to them whereas in fact everybody who was the least bit competent would have known, well, he should have said the traditional thing which is that we don't talk to them. He was trying to be friendly and relaxed. Yes, there was a little bit of gamesmanship going on, but they were a sophisticated press corps. Despite some early wobbles, Hodding and I were pretty sophisticated, too. So, after we each had our bath of fire, and yes, there was a constant effort to see whether we could be badgered into saying something that we

should not have been saying. We got quite good at refusing to talk when we did not want to talk, or turning the question aside or trying to seem helpful when we were not being helpful publicly so that it would look more competent or smooth. Yes, I was always on my guard and especially obviously you had certain people in the press corps. Either they came from a particular nation which was involved in a dispute with another nation so they were grinding an axe in terms of their questioning or they had an ideological slant as a domestic U.S. reporter that they were very pro-human rights or they were very anti-, I don't know, some domestic industry or something, and they were always trying to get you to say something which would imply that the U.S. Government was shifting toward their point of view. We were always trying to be careful to be honestly reflective of what the position of the U.S. Government was.

Now, the way the Foreign Service and the building in general worked since they didn't really trust the Spokesman, they wrote out all these little, they wrote out for you what you were supposed to say if you got the question, “are we going to see so and so?” They wanted to be confident that the spokesman wouldn't screw up. Well, you're in one of these press conferences on a daily basis and many of them went an hour or more and you're up there. I suppose once I began really to know what I was doing, I suppose I was reading out of those briefing books in front of me for 30 seconds or 45 seconds out of the whole hour. Other than that I was up there, kind of, it wasn't that I was making it up in some sort of airy-fairy sense, or saying what Tom Reston believed the U.S. Government should be doing, but I was speaking and I was making up the words as I went or calling on the words that I knew were honestly reflective of what the thinking of the U.S. Government was, or trying to advance its interests somehow.

Q: Well, Tom, I think this is a good place to stop and I like to put at the end, I think next time we've really talked about your introduction to this and your general approach. We're talking about being the assistant press spokesperson, but I think now would be a good time to begin to talk about some of the issues that became, I think particularly the Panama

Canal, China, obviously Camp David. The Carter approach to the Soviet Union at first we felt maybe we can talk to them.

RESTON: Yes, right exactly.

Q: Then of course Afghanistan and there must be other things in Latin America and China and all that.

RESTON: Africa, South Africa.

Q: Africa and so we'll start.

RESTON: Everyday it was something new, but yes I would like to talk about all of those things.

Q: Why don't you, you might want to make some notes of some of the issues that may have fallen through, but you get a feel for this. We'll do that the next time.

RESTON: Fine.

Q: Oh and one other thing. Two other things. One I wanted you to talk about Patt Derian and her operation, which seemed to be almost above and beyond the regular State Department on human rights.

RESTON: I'd love to talk about Patt.

Q: Then the evaluation of the various bureaus and how they helped you or didn't help you, particularly USIA and their operation because this is very much part of it. This is a whole laundry list, but anyway, the sort of things we can talk about.

RESTON: Great.

Q: Sort of what you did on a regular day from the beginning to the end and how you operated, what was coming at you.

RESTON: I should say that, let's just take a hypothetical day when my boss was out of the country or for any number of reasons might not have wanted to have the press conference that day. I usually got to the State Department.

Q: Well, let's do this the next time.

RESTON: Okay.

Q: Also, what you were doing on trips.

RESTON: Yes.

Q: Today is the 8th of July, 2005. Tom, you were going to talk about your day.

RESTON: Yes, let me explain how I spent the hours of my day when I was doing the press conference at the State Department which took place Monday through Friday at 12:00 noon in the briefing room in the Department. I got to the Department at about 7:00 in the morning and then I would read some of the wire service material that had come in over the night. I would read a selection of the foreign affairs articles in about I'd say a dozen U.S. papers, the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post, the Chicago Tribune, you know, the bigger U.S. papers. I would review some of the cable traffic that had come in over the course of the night. Then I would go up and see the Secretary of State at about 7:30 or 7:45 in the morning. Those meetings were generally just the two of us and I would alert him to what I thought were going to be the problems of the day or what I might likely be asked and get his preliminary hunches to what should be said about them. Then I would return to my office and talk to my staff about how to staff this out bureaucratically, what kinds of questions the various regional and functional bureaus ought to be asked to provide guidance to prepare for the day's briefing. Then at 8:30 the

Secretary had generally had a staff meeting of his assistant secretaries and I would attend that. That generally lasted for about 45 minutes. It generally was a kind of show-and-tell session where the assistant secretaries, if they had some problem on their minds, would bring it forward and it would be discussed. Then I would return back to my office and about 10:00 in the morning. Somebody from INR, the Intelligence and Research bureau would come by with the intelligence briefing which had been prepared overnight and he or she and I would review that. They would come into my office and close the door and we would sit there and I would review this and maybe ask them some questions about it. I had a very high clearance in the Department. I was told I had the second highest clearance that you could get in the U.S. government, so I had access to a lot of intelligence. I read that intelligence, I suppose, for the first two and two and a half years that I was at the Department and then I began to find it less useful and so I read it only episodically after that.

Q: Why did you find it was less useful? Was it because you had accumulated enough knowledge so it was more of the same or was it something else?

RESTON: I think it was something else. It wasn't my accumulated knowledge so much, although as the years wore on I was really accumulating quite a bit of knowledge about foreign political and economic situations, but frankly I just didn't find it all that interesting. I had access to the wire service copy that was coming in generated from around the world, not only the American wire services, but by foreign press and other wire services. I just found the intelligence actually less helpful than I had expected it to be, less timely than I expected it to be, and it was a disappointment actually.

Q: Well, as to put it in perspective, you were dealing with newspaper people who were reading the same things you were. Intelligence usually is not hot button issues, its usually development of long term things, I mean its really designed for a different audience.

RESTON: Yes, I think that's fair comment. What I generally was asked about in these press conferences is what was available to the press and so I think that's fair comment, that the intelligence was longer-term. Let's see, should I go on with? So, at about 11:00 the proposed guidances would come back in, the press guidances would come back in from the various bureaus, and the people from the bureaus would bring it to me in my office down on the second floor and I would review it and discuss it with them. Often I would find things in it that didn't make sense to me or that struck me somehow as wrong and I would have a further discussion with them as to why the guidance was written the way it was. Often I would find that one of the regional bureaus, for instance, had failed to clear its proposed guidance with another relevant bureau. In my day it was particularly the Bureau of Human Rights that they were attempting to cut out of the clearance process. Part of my job in that last hour before the briefing was really to engineer bureaucratic fights between functional bureaus and regional bureaus to arrive at consensus guidance. That became kind of a time-pressured situation between 11:00 and 12:00.

Along about 11:40 I'd say I'd go back to the Secretary of State and I would say well, here are the most problematic issues that I may be faced with. Here is what the building is proposing to say. Here is a conflict between say the Human Rights Bureau and the Latin American Bureau which they cannot seem to resolve and I would recommend a resolution to him or I would just put the two papers before him and he made the resolution or made the choice between the bureaus. In any event we would spend about 10 minutes, depending on how tricky the questions were, going over what I should say at noon. Then I would return back to the press conference room and the press conference started at noon. Those press conferences could run anywhere from 10 minutes to over an hour. They generally ran closer to an hour than they did to 10 minutes. They could ask me about any question concerning the U.S. government position on any foreign affairs question. I had to respond, or I had to not respond, as the case might be, or I had to promise if I didn't have an answer to try to get an answer for them. Let's see, I suppose out of that, let's just say an hour of a press conference, I might be reading the guidance from the bureau actually

reading the piece of paper that had been provided to me maybe for a minute and a half out of an hour-long press conference. Otherwise, I was just, on the basis of my accumulated knowledge or my familiarity with what the existing U.S. government position would be, I would just be talking to them or I would be making it up as I went along — although when I was making it up I was sure that my words, they were the position of the government, because of course nobody was interested in my position about foreign affairs. They were only interested in me as a mouthpiece for the U.S. Government.

It was very, tended to be a very, well, in the beginning certainly, it tended to be a very intense time of the day for me because I was being ultra careful in what I was saying. As the months wore on and the years wore on I became more relaxed at the podium, more sure that when I was speaking I knew I had confidence in what I was saying, that it did reflect U.S. Government policy. One of the things about the job that actually surprised me was how little I got in trouble. I was expecting going into it that I would get into trouble more than I did get into trouble. Getting into trouble for misspeaking or not delivering the actual policy of the government. That rarely happened. Another thing that rarely happened or almost never happened was that, and this is something that I worried about in the beginning, is I would be saying one thing at the State Department and the White House or the CIA or somebody else would be saying something contradictory. That was something that rarely happened. I should go back and say along about 11:15 every morning there was a conference telephone call between the Press Secretary to the President, somebody from the National Security Council and the Defense Department, the CIA and myself from the State Department, and we would kind of review which part of the government would answer which questions or what I was planning to say about any particular problem that was coming up. Often, if it was a diplomatic triumph, the White House would say, “well, we'll handle that,” and if it was a diplomatic disaster they said: “you handle that, Reston.” So, that was often the way it turned out.

Also, they were unsure of themselves at the White House on foreign policy issues; they were more sure of themselves on domestic politics, so they often would sluff things to

the State Department that they felt for called for a substantive knowledge of international affairs which they felt uncomfortable with. Anyway, after the press conference was over during the course of the afternoon, I would be receiving correspondents in my office and newspaper people in my office. These were journalists from the United States and from around the world. They would come in and probe me on various things I had said during the press conference wanting to know why I had phrased something in a particular way. I was also reading more wire service copy during the afternoon, more newspaper articles. I was taking a lot of telephone calls from journalists from around the world who were not at the press conference. Then about 6:30 or quarter to 7:00 I would go back to see the Secretary of State and talk with him about what had happened at the press conference, if there was a problem with that, talk to him about what had happened during the course of the afternoon, what I thought might likely develop over the course of the night and what we might be faced with in the morning. I asked for his views about that or asked him to put his mind to it so that we could discuss it the next morning.

Q: Sounds like you had a full plate.

RESTON: Yes, I did indeed. I enjoyed it all though.

Q: Tell me something about what the Press Office was like?

RESTON: It was a wonderful place to work, or at least, I did my best to make it so. It was fun. The culture of the building could sometimes seem formalistic, hierarchical and ultra-cautious, all for good and sufficient reasons. But the Press Office atmosphere was the antithesis of all that. It was chaotic; it was make-do; it was chop-through the obstacles; it was awash in gallows humor. I kept an original drawing by the Washington Post cartoonist Herblock on the door of my office: it showed the purportedly precipitous decline in the prestige of American foreign policy under the Carter Administration. The Office was constantly on the verge of getting out-of-hand. I had to close down a very public betting pool on where in the world a radioactive Soviet satellite would crash-land threatening to

annihilate thousands. The atmosphere was madcap, from dawn 'til way past quittingtime at night.

We were inspected during my tenure. The Inspector General's team was amazed and horrified, and ultimately told us we were the best-run, most efficient office in the Bureau of Public Affairs. I cut my budget in absolute terms, on my own initiative, every single year I was there.

I am proud of the spirit of the people who worked there. Underneath their good humor, they were thorough-going professionals, careful and substantive, and they protected and advanced the interests of the Foreign Service and the U.S. Government, while maintaining a genuine respect for the press and the American public. It was a good show.

Q: How about the people you worked most directly with?

RESTON: The job of the Spokesman at the Department is peculiar in many ways, but I think one of them is the unusual degree in which he depends on his colleagues. It is not as if the Spokesman has no power. He does have power, but it is not an independent sort of power, and his power is perceived by most of the building as being a negative sort of powethe power to get everyone in trouble. The Spokesman must depend utterly on the rest of the building for information.

When I was there, I felt this lack of an independent base, and it was frustrating to me at first. I was not familiar with this dynamic to the extent that I felt it at State. It was not what I had felt as a newspaperman or a Virginia politician or as an attorney, which were the pursuits I had before I got there. But the reality for me, the sudden reality, was the need to adapt to a situation where I had to be reliant on others in almost every respect. It was good for me, in retrospect, but I had to learn it.

I was helped immeasurable by those I worked with within my office. I had two wonderful career deputies: David Passage, who came to me from being Political Counselor in

Embassy Canberra; and Ken Brown, who came to me from the African Bureau. It was Ken Brown, really, who had the insight to understand how at-sea I really was in my new bureaucratic world, and with the generosity of spirit so characteristic of him, he applied his wisdom and kindness to the task of helping me understand how to navigate in those sometimes-very-treacherous waters. I believe we forged a relationship of trust and respect which not only made our work relaxed and fun and appealing amidst what could be the most appalling circumstances, but also served as a model for how a healthy insider-outsider dialogue can contribute to the Department's overall efforts. He went on to a brilliant career in the Foreign Service, and I only hope that the ample, Department-wide range of the Press Office contributed something to his perspective, as well as to his joy when he worked there.

Q: You had the 12:00 press conference. Would there be extraordinary press conferences sometimes, something fast-breaking?

RESTON: Yes. We did occasionally call press conferences when the government had done something such as recognizing the Government of China and Beijing and there would be special briefings which were handled sometimes by me but more often handled by the desk officer or an expert in the field, but sometimes I did it. Sometimes there were extraordinary events. I remember one Saturday, the Jonestown massacre or whatever you want to call it in Guyana, when there were so many people who committed suicide, American citizens, when that happened. I can remember the Foreign Service Officer for the Guyana desk came in and said to me, “This is what has happened. I want you to know about it.” He said as he left my office as he was opening the door, he said, “My God, you can't talk about this. Don't let anybody know about this.” I said to him, “Do you know what is going to happen to my telephone in about 10 minutes' time? It's going to light up from calls from all over the world,” which indeed it did. I held four press conferences that Saturday. There was a certain amount of questioning, as I recall, as to how much contact had taken place between the embassy and the American colony at Jonestown, but I think I

would have regarded it as extremely unfair to blame the embassy for not, you know, I don't know what you would have hoped that they would have done to prevent the thing.

Q: We sent people up there, in fact, one of our officers, the deputy chief of mission was actually wounded.

RESTON: Yes, that's right.

Q: But, most of the distancing happened later on when congress started to call witnesses up and the people who were there were not well supported.

RESTON: It wouldn't be the first time, would it?

Q: No. You mentioned often having to try to settle disputes or help one side or the other with the human rights bureau and the geographic bureaus usually the American republic bureau. Patt Derian had very strict uncompromising views of human rights and Latin American bureau having to deal with trying to conduct relations with these countries without having everything turn on human rights. How did you fit into this on this sort of constant conflict?

RESTON: Well, the job that I had at the State Department was a very interesting one because for a lot of the ongoing policy disputes at the State Department, the forum of the briefing and the mechanism of the briefing paper tended to be a microcosm of the bigger policy disputes, and you're right that there was a constant tension between each of the regional bureaus actually, not only the Latin American Bureau, and the Human Rights Bureau. The way it came to me is that often I would find that the regional bureaus would try to bureaucratically grab ahold of the issue of writing the guidance for the Spokesman and they would not clear it with the Human Rights Bureau even though it had clear implications for our human rights policy. I felt that it was my job, if they had not cleared it with the Human Rights Bureau to make sure that they ran it past the Human Rights Bureau. That often engendered bitter fights which were often carried out right in front of

me as I waited for them to come to some sort of conclusion. Often these fights were taking place upstairs before they came back to me with a consensus position, but the human rights policy was a central tenant of the Carter administration. It was a serious attempt to work those concerns into American foreign policy. It was resisted in the beginning by the career Foreign Service because they found it embarrassing and sloppy and difficult to execute and it was just a big problem for them. Quite naturally they sought to downplay it or to put it entirely under the carpet, but this is an example of a policy which a new administration brings. We had won the election. Governor Carter had talked a lot about putting human rights into the substance of our foreign policy and therefore, you could have expected ahead of time something to develop exactly as it did develop. I think it's an example actually of the tug-of-war between the political appointees and the career Foreign Service which is a healthy tug-of-war. It's a good substantive debate and if it's carried on with respect by each side, then it can be a fruitful ongoing dialogue and have an ongoing influence on American foreign policy.

Q: Did you find the foreign press particularly seized on the human rights relations or issues with a certain amount of gusto in that area or were they a little bit concerned about their own government and how they deal with it?

RESTON: No, it wasn't only the foreign press corps, but anytime that one of these human rights reports would surface or a human rights problem would surface the foreign press would be delighted to see if they could, to see what I would say because it could become a major story back home if I were denouncing their government for something. They did seize on it. They tried to provoke the spokesman into saying something harsh about their own government and I quite often did if it was within the understood policy framework of the government. In those days we were new to the human rights policy and it was often carried on in words as well as in substantive actions. There was a lot of that sort of thing. I'm sure the headlines abroad were quite shrill in terms of some of the things that I had to say, and we intended for it to sound shrill in some cases.

Q: Did you get caught, I mean sometimes there are controversies that really pertain only to the United States and another country. What I'm thinking of, not a specific case, but you know, you have the ambassador who's been appointed to X country and it turns out that the ambassador designate has got to have a dubious personnel file for one reason or another and of course that's big news to the country where he or she is supposed to go, but nobody else cares. Did you find yourself getting involved in these country specific problems?

RESTON: Yes, anything was fair game. Anything across the board was fair game and I did find myself getting involved in very specific controversies, controversies involving individual people such as the example, the hypothetical example that you raised, but anything was fair game. I was ranging all across the government and from economics to politics to the management of the State Department to things having military implications to all kinds of things.

Q: Well, I imagine there would be times when somebody would get up and say, how come you denied a visa to our most prominent author or something like that and you didn't know anything about it?

RESTON: If that were the case I would say, well, I would promise to check into that and get them an answer later on during the course of the afternoon. Then when the press conference was over we would go to the desk involved or the human rights bureau if it had something to do with them and we would try to get an answer. Now, obviously there were some questions I was asked that the Department had no intention of answering and they just wanted me to get rid of the question. They did not want to have their feet held to the fire and in that case if I knew that to be the position of the Department I would do my very best to deep-six the question.

Q: How would you go about that?

RESTON: My demeanor would I think become quite casual and I would say I just don't think that's a promising line of inquiry. I'm not sure I really can get you an answer to that question and let's move on to something else.

Q: You learn to be a bit of an actor I take it.

RESTON: Yes. I often had this very wooden kind of demeanor, but there were occasions when something terrible had happened that we were very disturbed about. There were times when the Secretary of State would say: “You go down there and you say this and you look angry when you say it.” That's a direct quote from Secretary Vance when there was a coup d'etat in Bolivia and we had just been there, Vance and I, at an OAS meeting in La Paz and had had lunch with all the coup plotters two days earlier and Vance had told them that we did not want a coup d'etat and as soon as we arrived back in Washington they staged the coup d'etat and so we were quite angry about that and I was told to look angry and I did.

Q: Did you find yourself up against some of the top guns of the international press world and all who would come and try to overwhelm you, charm you? I'm thinking about, I don't know if she was still operating, Ariana Fallaci, the Italian journalist who seemed to get people to speak things that they wished they hadn't, I mean but there are others of this nature. Did they come and ply their charms on you?

RESTON: Occasionally, although sometimes they would feel that they could go directly to the policy makers. Maybe they didn't perceive that my office often had something to say about who was getting to see some of the policy makers. By the time I had been doing this for several months I became extremely adept at it and this is another thing that I worried about that didn't turn out really to be a problem. I worried about getting into a public situation or even a private interview where the journalists would be so tricky in their questions or so insistent or so able somehow magically to apply pressure to me that I would be led down the garden path far beyond what I was supposed to be saying. I did not

find that to be a problem at all. I found I could handle myself perfectly well and I could see the warning signs coming if they were trying to lead me down the path.

Q: Did you ever make a point of having a silent observer sitting behind you who maybe knew some of the subjects who would maybe lean forward and say, Tom, take care here or something like that on issues?

RESTON: Occasionally I would be giving a press conference usually of a special nature if a special situation had arisen, country-specific, and I would have, I would ask, invite the desk officer or some expert in the field to attend the press conference and if I got into trouble or if I didn't know the answer or I thought that he would have a more rich way of answering the question than I would, I would simply call on him and he would step to the podium and say his piece. Now, just for bureaucratic reasons or for pride reasons, sometimes I'd try to handle those situations myself, after all I was the Spokesman for the Department and it was my job to know or to get informed quickly about a lot of very particularistic situations. It happened from time to time and of course I was completely the prisoner of the career Foreign Service and the experts in the field for whom I developed a very great respect. I depended on them utterly for all the information that was at my hands. It was not a — we were not enemies. We were allies or at least I tried to make us allies.

Q: Yes, well, everybody wants the United States and the people they're working with to look good.

RESTON: Yes.

Q: What about some case specific things, did you get involved in the Panama Canal negotiation, I mean basically the negotiations were in the senate over approving the Panama Canal, new Panama Canal Treaty, but it had all sorts of ramifications. Did that cross your path?

RESTON: Oh, sure it did. The Panama Canal Treaty fight was a huge fight and yes, we were watching the Senate extremely carefully and counting votes very carefully. It seems to me we won that by a single vote in the Senate. In cases when we had a big fight on Capitol Hill concerning a foreign policy initiative, the government would form a working group that had some so-called substantive people on it and some people who were lobbying the Hill and those people would be at work during the course of the day and I would often check with them before a press conference or they would come to me and say look, you know, Senator Domenici is particularly concerned about this so please stay away from that or please say something that we can use to help persuade Domenici to turn his vote. Yes, that particular thing was a constant source of questioning at the briefing. I was regularly in touch with Sol Linowitz and well, with Sol Linowitz who was the chief negotiator, and who was a friend of mine before I had gotten to the Department.

Q: Camp David work was done very much at the White House level, but how about I mean was there sort of different levels? Were you dealing with one level with processing and all and the White House or another?

RESTON: No, you're absolutely right about Camp David. That was easy for me because I didn't really have any part in that. They were so concerned about leaks and maintaining the security of the negotiations that it was entirely handled by the White House, although of course the State Department was involved in it. Vance was up there constantly during the negotiations as well as some of his colleagues, Herb Hansell, the legal counsel of the Department and a handful of other people. They were thoroughly involved, but I was not involved. No news about that came out of the State Department. I mean, I used to talk to Jody Powell periodically when it was going on, but I didn't really try to find out from him exactly what was going on. I just preferred to let them do it since that's what they wanted.

Q: How about the Iranian, first the expulsion of the Shah from Iran and then the hostage thing? How did that affect you?

RESTON: That took over my life for about a year. The relationship between the United States and Iran and the Shah of Iran was a very close relationship and it was the subject of some controversy inside the Department. Before this all erupted in public, for instance, there was a big controversy about how much weapons we should be selling to the Shah and whether, in fact, he was buying so many weapons from us that it was just unbalancing his budget and his ability to pay for them, as well as for his other responsibilities. We were very concerned with stability in the Gulf and felt that if the Shah were well armed he would be able to play a role in keeping stability in the region. When the popular unrest started surfacing there was kind of a constant bureaucratic struggle inside the State Department. I think everyone wanted to save the Shah's government, but there was a strong disagreement within the Department as to whether the Shah should be permitted to clamp down, as he clearly wanted to do, or whether we should continue to encourage the Shah to pay more respect to norms of international human rights as a way to try to soften and gentle the situation down and allow him to get through that period of crisis. Of course he did not get through the period of crisis. He did have to leave Iran. How to deal with what was really a humiliation for the Shah and a humiliation for American foreign policy and kind of a dangerous situation in terms of the kind of government that seemed to be emerging in his place was a nightmare for us. Not only that, there was the added complexity that once the Shah left, under the guise of needing medical attention abroad, he went to Panama and he felt lonely there and the former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was pressuring, putting enormous pressure on the U.S. Government and on the State Department to allow the Shah to come to New York for medical treatment for his cancer, which we acceded to. I can remember going to see Vance the night that we decided to do that and saying to him, you know, I don't really have a part in this decision, but I can tell you this is just going to raise unshirted hell for us in Iran and for me in the briefing, as indeed it did. It was the final thing that kind of, the final straw that caused their domestic politics to become unhinged and ultimately caused the hostage problem for us.

Q: How during this crisis, how did the press, both American and international press, respond to this? Did you have the feeling they were looking for flaws in our dealing with this or did they understand the major problems and feelings Ayatollah Khomeini and that form of government which we still haven't been able to deal with?

RESTON: No, we haven't. The press corps, any press corps takes on the coloration of the people it covers and the press corps at the State Department both foreign and domestic are an exceedingly sophisticated bunch of people. I think that they probably had a full understanding of the difficulties that the government was facing. You know, our principle problem for the first year of the hostage crisis was finding someone credible to talk to that you could negotiate with. I think the press corps understood that. Nevertheless, they also understood the news value of a government that seemed to be completely at sea and not capable of bringing this crisis to a conclusion and they knew that they were possessed of a major and fascinating international story which struck emotional chords in the American public because it was a humiliation for the United States. They pursued it relentlessly. What are you doing? Why are you getting no place with it? What do you intend to do next? Can you trust this intermediary? How could you trust this intermediary? It went on and on and on. It was like just a constant drumbeat for a year and a half. Right from the beginning, right until the very end. It was a terrible pressured situation for my office in particular because in the first six months or eight months of the crisis the channel of negotiation between the U.S. Government and the people who had taken the hostages really ran through my office. They would make a statement in the basement of the embassy in Tehran and we would respond to it in the press conference. They would respond to us and for lack of a serious diplomatic back channel, that was where the negotiations were taking place. It was an incredible frustration to the State Department which obviously didn't feel that the briefing room was the proper place to have such a negotiation, as indeed it wasn't, but we were incapable of finding another way to talk to them for a period of time.

Q: Well, did you find yourself being in the center of this thing, you get all sorts of operators, the Washington hands, foreign hands, everybody who thinks they've got the way, you know, there's nothing worse than a situation that just drags on and you have people who sort of come out of the woodwork who often basically confidence type people. You had some of that in Iraq. Did you find yourself dealing with some rather peculiar, or oily or slippery characters?

RESTON: Oh, I think there were some, yes, during the hostage crisis. There were people claiming that they had a channel into somebody in Tehran. The trouble was that these guys in the basement of the embassy were not really part of the Iranian government or at least it was convenient for the Iranian government to say, listen, we have no control over those people, we can't help with this situation. There were people coming out of the woodwork with suggestions of setting up meetings in the Netherlands and here and there. Obviously we were soliciting opinions from people who knew the region well, who knew Iran well. I used to, I had a number of friends who were very familiar with the Middle East and of course this was the normal subject of conversation, it was the main thing that was going on. We were all trying to find a way to deal with them and until it got in a proper channel with Warren Christopher in our embassy in Algiers, it was a kind of a mess. He finally got it in a proper channel and was able to bring it to resolution. When I left the Department — I had been very close to Warren Christopher while I was there — and I asked for a photograph of him, a signed photograph, and he said yes and I said, well, I want to choose the photograph. I chose the photograph of him signing the agreement that let the hostages out, but it was only a picture of his hand signing the document. It was not a picture of his face and I asked him to sign that photograph because I felt that his hand was present in so much of the work of the Department in those days, but never his face.

Q: Did you have problems I think at that time with, I think of Jesse Jackson and I think of who's the guy, the former attorney general who got into everything?

RESTON: Oh, Ramsey Clark.

Q: Ramsey Clark, you know, operators like that. I won't say they're publicity hounds, but when there is publicity events going on they're always there.

RESTON: Yes, they are. They were kind of an annoyance; I think an annoyance to the Department. In most cases they're an annoyance to the Department, but I became very adept at saying, well, Jesse Jackson can say whatever he wants to say. He's not speaking for the U.S. Government. I had no problem giving him, or someone like him, the back of my hand. We had an institutional interest the State Department did, in trying to control the conversation. Any time you get people buzzing around the outside it can complicate matters. On the other hand, you know, sometimes the Department is stuck and it does not see a way through these problems and occasionally an outsider can help the Department. Jimmy Carter is an example in the years following his presidency. Occasionally he has intervened in touchy political situations in Korea or Haiti that have annoyed our government intensely, but probably in retrospect had a positive influence. Now, President Carter is not Jesse Jackson, there's a difference.

Q: No, that's a completely different type of effectiveness and motivation I would say. What about you were talking about your day. What about trips with the Secretary? How did that work?

RESTON: My boss Hodding Carter and I would divvy up the trips. For instance, the Secretary always went to the United Nations General Assembly meeting in New York in, I think, at the beginning of October or end of September and he would be up there for two weeks. Hodding would take one week of him and I would take the second week. Then some trips Hodding simply didn't want to go on. Often those were trips to Latin America. I spoke Spanish and so I would make those trips. I suppose I was traveling outside the U.S. with the Secretary maybe six times a year, once every couple of months and sometimes I would make other kinds of trips. I would travel with Warren Christopher since he was the

Deputy Secretary and I was the Deputy Spokesman. Sometimes I would be dispatched abroad on a particular mission such as the opening of our diplomatic mission in Havana for the first time in 30 years or, say, I was dispatched to the Belgrade Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which was the human rights conference where Arthur Goldberg was the U.S. ambassador. I think the Department was a little leery of Arthur's penchant for speaking his mind publicly. I think they wanted someone there, certainly not to keep tabs on him or to try to calm him down because that was impossible when he wanted to say something, but at least to be a voice of caution in terms of what, how the press should be handled. I think Arthur was an extremely effective U.S. ambassador to that conference, but he did not play by the same rules that normal earthlings would play by or certainly career Foreign Service Officers.

Q: Did you find yourself saying, well, he didn't really mean to say that?

RESTON: No. I would have been, no, I would not have wanted to say that about Arthur Goldberg.

Q: What a way to continue a career.

RESTON: Actually I became quite close to him. I admired him and I thought he was a public servant of enormous distinction and served the country very well. I think there was method in his madness as to how he was dealing with the other diplomats at the conference and dealing with the press. I thought, I can remember coming back to Washington after being out in Belgrade, I think it was about for three weeks, and going in to see Secretary Vance and I said to him, you know, I've been out there for three weeks and you're going to hear a lot of criticism of Goldberg, but, I said, he has been very effective out there in terms of the way he's dealing with these things. I had a lot of confidence in him, but he dealt with things, as Andy Young dealt with things in particular ways, and sometimes it caused problems. Some people are laws unto themselves.

Q: Did you have much contact with Carter at all?

RESTON: Not really, no. I was constantly in touch with the White House, but I had very little contact with Carter. I used to see him occasionally and I had known him before he was elected and when he was campaigning, and when I see him these days now that he's retired, we always have very pleasant conversations. I saw him last at the Democratic convention, well, the last Democratic convention six months or ago or a year ago, I guess.

Q: Did you do any work at the Department of State which was not directly related to handling the press?

RESTON: Yes. Because of my interest in civil rights, I spent some time as my bureau's representative on a committee to study how to diversify the personnel at the State Department, to bring in more women and minorities into the Foreign Service and Civil Service working there.

Q: Any other non-press-related work?

RESTON: Well, there were occasions, very few and far-between. It was extremely rare. I can mention a couple.

When Jimmy Carter came in, I think he genuinely wanted to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba, and of course, there were difficulties with that, not only as a matter of domestic politics, but also substantively. The main substantive difficulty was Cuban activity in Africa. Cuba had a lot of troops on the ground in Angola during that conflict, as well as presences elsewhere on the continent, and that was a problem for us. Cater was the one who first established our Interests Section in Havana, with American diplomats actually stationed in the Cuban capital, and Cuban diplomats here in Washington. None of the American diplomats going into Havana had ever been there before, but I had been there a couple of times, for a total of about four months, in 1967 and 1969, a few years before. So Warren Christopher, who was then Deputy Secretary, asked me to go in with the first contingent

of American diplomats, which I did. He had two purposes in mind for me, the first of which was fairly straightforward, and that was to help handle the press at the opening-up of our diplomatic post in Havana. That was the public purpose. But he had another, secret purpose for me as well.

He wanted the message conveyed that Carter wanted to move forward with normalization of diplomatic relations, but the African presence of the Cubans was a problem. Before the 1976 election, Carter had been told by the Swedish Prime Minister, Olaf Palme, that Castro had promised him that he would withdraw Cuban troops from Africa. Since they were not being withdrawn, the question had begun to stick in the President's craw. Carter was having not only a policy problem with the Cuban position, but he had begun to believe that Castro's word could not be trusted. Under these circumstances, the normalization was not going to move forward. This was the message Christopher wanted me to convey to the Cuban Ministry of External Relations, privately, and away from the hearing of the diplomats being sent to the new Interests Section. There was a deep, personal problem involving honor President Carter was having. I conveyed it.

The answer I got surprised me. It was ominous, but it was serious, and it got the attention of Washington when I conveyed it back to Christopher on arriving home. I was told that Palme may have misinterpreted what Castro said — this was of no consequence, but what followed it was — and in any event, there would be no withdrawal from Africa. The Americans were misinterpreting the motives of the Cuban government. The Americans believed that the Cubans were engaged in Africa primarily as a foreign-policy initiative, either at the behest of the Russians, or in an attempt to expand Cuban influence in the Third World. This missed the main point. The Africa interventions were being carried out for domestic political reasons in Cuba, not international ones. The first wave of Cuban youth to arise after 1959 had gone through many revolutionary experiences which had bound them emotionally to the government. Now, a new generations of youth was arising, without these domestic revolutionary experiences. The loyalties of this new wave of youth had to be secured, and the Cuban government's method was to put them through

the internationalist military expeditions in Africa. The policy was aimed at securing the Revolution at home, not so much at expanding Cuba's influence abroad. There would be no change.

It was quite a sobering conversation, and was received as such in Washington. I conveyed what had been told to me accurately, but I was also able to put it in the context I had learned a decade earlier when I was in Cuba, about just how seriously the Cubans viewed their efforts to instill political loyalties in the youth of the island. I had written my thesis at Harvard on just this type of question. Life is choices, and, understandable though the Cuban choice of that moment might have been, it proved to have tremendous implications for the future of their country.

There is one other non-press story I might mention. It has to do with Spain. During my service in the government, Spain was in political evolution, in fact, had been for some time since the death of Franco. Along the way, I had developed a cordial, though I wouldn't say close, relationship with the Spanish Ambassador in Washington. His Press Attach# came to see me one day and asked if I would have lunch with the Ambassador, and we did that at his residence. At issue was Pablo Picasso's painting, the “Guernica,” which then hung in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Picasso had given this painting to the American people, with the proviso that it not be returned to Spain until democracy returned to the country. Spain wanted it back. But Spain did not want to ask for it. Could I use my good offices to arrange for the Americans to offer the painting back to Spain, without the Spaniards having to ask for it? I, of course, was interested to carry this message back to the DepartmenI took it to Warren Christopheand I had views on the subject (I agreed with the Spanish Ambassador that it was time). I cannot imagine a teensier asterisk in history than this one, and I was proud to have carried the first messages about it.

Q: Is there anything else you think we should cover about this time you were doing this?

RESTON: I'd like to tell a story involving the resignation of Ambassador Young from the government, Andrew Young who was our ambassador to the United Nations and a member of the cabinet, because I think it's illustrative of the kind of man that Cyrus Vance was. It involves the problem that got completely out of hand and caused his resignation: meetings that he was having with the Palestine Liberation Organization, its representative at the United Nations. That was contrary to U.S. policy at the time. Our diplomats were not supposed to be meeting with them directly because we didn't recognize their status, or, we, for political reasons, we just didn't do it and it was one of the clear no-no's of American foreign policy. Andy Young, in an effort to solve a problem at the United Nations, did begin meeting privately with the head of the PLO delegation. When word of this began to surface, Vance and I were in La Paz, Bolivia, and I was told by the U.S. Mission to the UN to say, oh, well, this was nothing really. It was just a casual meeting and just pleasantries were exchanged. It was not a serious thing. Well, as it turned out, it was quite serious. It was a series of meetings and they were quite lengthy meetings and quite substantive. Over the weekend when we were returning from La Paz, it surfaced in the press, I think out of the Israeli Embassy in Washington, what the truth of the matter was.

I can remember going in to see the Secretary on Monday morning at 7:00 and we had returned to Washington and saying, look, I'm sorry, but we've got what appears to be a major problem here. The explanation which the United Nations Mission, the USUN, was giving does not appear to square with the truth in this question and we are on record as giving, I am on record as giving, the explanation I was told to by USUN. He said to me at that moment, he said, “Go back to your office, don't say anything about this and come back and see me in an hour.” I did, and when I came back to his office, there were four or five of his inner circle there. This was in his small back office, he rarely or never used his formal ceremonial office, but there was a back room, a very small back room off of it, which he used. I walked in an hour later to see him and he was seated at the desk and he said, take a seat and I sat down and he said to me, “Now, the first thing that we are going to do is to protect your integrity.” He said, “I want you to go down at noon today and

apologize for the statement that you made over the weekend giving the explanation that was not truthful." I think that says so much about Cyrus Vance. We were all caught in a very awkward situation. I personally had the highest respect both for Vance and for Young. Young was close to the president and it was a highly pressured situation. It would have been somehow, I'm sure, so easy for the government to say oh, well, Reston got it wrong and let's blame Reston for this and make him take the fall. The nature of Cyrus Vance was completely different. I just felt so clean working for him. The decency of the man really showed in everything that he did, in every instinct that he had, and I walked out of that meeting just kind of three inches above the floor thinking well, golly, this is a wonderful man to work for.

Q: How did the press receive your explanation?

RESTON: Well, unfortunately, this was the summertime and there wasn't much else going on at the time and so the resignation of Ambassador Young did not end the story. People in the press corps wanted to know all kinds of things, how this could have happened, how he could have decided to break the policy, how the truth surfaced, where, who had the information that he was not, that these were not casual meetings, but substantive meetings. The story went on for about 10 days and finally it was a continuing kind of hemorrhage to the government and I was really getting no place in terms of trying to turn it off, to stop it. Finally I said to them, look we've been over this time and time again. If you read very carefully the words I've been using, I think you will find out more about this story than appears on the surface, but as for me, I am simply not going to answer any further questions about it at all, and I didn't. Every time I got a question about it I would say: I'm sorry; I refuse to answer that question. That didn't stop it immediately, but it stopped it a day or two later and we went on to other things and we had a new ambassador, Don McHenry, and we went on to other difficulties.

Q: Were you there when Vance resigned?

RESTON: Yes, indeed I was.

Q: How did that go? I mean was that sort of were you sensing that was in the wind? How was Vance responding to the period after the failed rescue attempt of the hostages. It seemed to be the specific cause of this.

RESTON: Well, it was a sad period for me. I was devoted to Vance. I had not had any experience of him before I had met him when I worked at the State Department, but I felt very close to him as a result of our working together and I had an enormous respect and affection for him. He had advised the president prior to the rescue attempt that he had made a promise to the Europeans prior to the rescue effort that if there was going to be a rescue effort he would at least inform them prior to it's taking place. What happened was that he went on a brief vacation and a decision was made at the White House. Warren Christopher was there for the State Department, but really had not expected the whole issue to arise during that meeting and, I think, felt a little ill-equipped to defend the position of the Department that at least we had to inform our allies. The Department had always been skeptical of rescue efforts. Anyway, the decision was made while Vance was out of town, which Vance felt was completely unfair to him bureaucratically at the end, and he was right about that. It was a kind of a dirty way to do it, I think. He told the president that as a result of the decision that he was going to resign no matter whether the hostage rescue mission was a success or a failure, and he did. I saw some of him during this critical period of a day or two when he returned from vacation and obviously the thing was moving forward, and he was in pain physically. He was suffering from gout, as I recall. He was on a stick and moving slowly. I think he felt he had been treated unfairly.

There wasn't a shred of complaining or feeling sorry for himself, at least not that I saw, but he just soldiered forth and he tendered his resignation as he had promised the president he would and I must say I don't think the President handled the thing very well at all. I remember sitting in my office watching television that afternoon, the afternoon after Vance had resigned and hearing the President say, well, he was going to choose another

Secretary of State and this time he would choose a gentleman. When I heard that I picked up the telephone and called the President's press secretary Jody Powell and I said, “Jody, I've been over here for three-and-a-half years now and I have carried a lot of water for the White House, as you well know, but this is just the limit. This remark was totally unnecessary and uncalled for and very regrettable.” That's the way I felt about it.

Q: Yes. Well, after Vance resigned, did you stay on how much longer?

RESTON: When Vance resigned he asked that nobody leave with him. He did not want to make it appear as if there was some sort of exodus from the State Department as a result of his leaving and my boss Hodding Carter and I stayed for six weeks. We were the first to leave. We left in the same week. I left a couple of days after Hodding did. We just felt we were very tired, the hostage crisis thing had made us exhausted. Very frankly, our political hunch — and Hodding and I were both domestic politicians, you remember — our hunch was that Carter would lose the election. As you know, with any government that is up for reelection, in the final year of the administration, nothing much happens. They don't want to take any new initiatives or to take any actions that might kind of upset the apple cart or change the political calculus of the campaign so it was not the most — it was not a time of new initiatives and moving forward. It was a time of treading water. So, for all those reasons, I think, Hodding and I just felt that it was time for us to go.

Q: What did you do?

RESTON: When I resigned I was asked by the Chinese ambassador in Washington whether I would like to come to China and visit China, which I had never visited before, and I said yes, that I would like to do that. So, I was a guest of their foreign ministry. I spent a month in China kind of touring around and seeing various different parts of China and also talking in Beijing with their Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials there, about Sino-American relations. Then I also had the opportunity to go to North Korea during that trip as long as I was in the region and I spent about 10 days in North Korea. I think I was the

ninth American to get in there legally since it was closed down in the aftermath of the War in 1953.

Q: Why were you given this access both in China and Korea? Do you know, I mean what was in it for them?

RESTON: Gosh, I would very much hesitate to speculate about what is in the mind of any North Korean official. I find them so bizarre, and their whole system and way of doing things there, bizarre. I have no idea what was in it for them. I didn't say anything while I was there. I was quite careful of how I spoke. I was fascinated to go there and see what it was like. The Chinese thing, I think, was just one of those normal things where governments want to make American officials cognizant of what goes on in their country. We had very good relations with the Chinese in those days.

Q: Did you when you went to North Korea, did you get the equivalent to a briefing or something before you left, saying look for this or push this or do that?

RESTON: No. That it was partly because the decision of the North Koreans to let me in was very much delayed and delayed and I had gotten all the way to Beijing by the time I had word from the North Koreans that they would let me in. So, as soon as I got word, I went directly in. I did not have a briefing from the U.S. government, but I did, in Tokyo, I think, before I went to China, I said, I've got this, I met with the CIA person in the embassy and he said, “Look, I've got this request pending to get into North Korea and I just want you to know about that and I'll be there. I would be delighted to talk with any of your colleagues in China after I get out if they wish to get in touch with me and this is where I'll be in China. I'd be happy to share my impressions with you.” They never got in touch with me.

Q: How did they handle you in North Korea?

RESTON: Well, it's a completely odd situation for an American or a Westerner. It was then. I think I've never been any place that is so revolting to my sense of ethics or politics as North Korea is: completely beyond any imagination of a Soviet police state. It was all under lock and key. Very disturbing to me. I didn't like it at all. I was polite. I was inquisitive. I kept asking to see more and more and to talk to as many people as I could while I was there to try to understand their point of view or how they saw the region and what their beefs were, because everybody has beefs. I just kind of put on my old journalist cap to try to find out as much as I could while I was there. It was fascinating.

Q: Well, then after this what did you do?

RESTON: I returned home, as I told Jody Powell when I resigned from the government in the summer, I told him that I was off to China and that I wanted to return in the fall and I wanted to campaign for President Carter's reelection, which I did. I was sent off as a surrogate to debate with various Reagan campaign supporters and to make speeches about foreign policy, particularly in Virginia which was my home state, but also elsewhere. I can't remember all the places I went, but I did that for about the last three weeks in the campaign.

Q: Was it your feeling that Carter lost the election or Reagan won it?

RESTON: The longer the period is between me and Ronald Reagan the more respect I have for President Reagan. It's not that I agreed with him, but I think he was an instinctive politician and I think he had an instinctive feeling for the American people — for our optimism and our sense of destiny. He was very good at that, and unfortunately, President Carter, I think, did not have that instinctive connection with the American people, the way Reagan did.

Q: I sense meanness there did I didn't get from Reagan.

RESTON: Can you say that again?

Q: Meanness.

RESTON: To Carter?

Q: I mean like a gentleman. I mean he certainly did things that I liked.

RESTON: Every once in a while, I think you're right; there is a petty side to him; it doesn't surface very often, but it does surface. I notice it quite a bit when it does. Reagan, as much as I hate to say it, I think that Reagan probably — people saw something in him that they really believed in. Clearly the Crater people were way behind the eight ball because of the Iran hostage crisis. They were not able or we were not able to rescue the nation from this humiliation that had taken place under his watch.

Q: Well, then after the election, what happened to you?

RESTON: I went back to practicing law in Washington and doing international law and being a private citizen and a very interested observer of foreign policy and international affairs as well as domestic politics. I began to write some about it.

Q: Well, quite a good place to stop then. I think we've worked on this and Tom, it's been fascinating. Let's say you got your job at an interesting time, didn't you?

RESTON: Yes. I sure did.

Q: I mean with all our talk about Carter, Carter stirred things up much more on the policy side. Do you think that the Panama Canal the recognition of communist China, the Camp David accords, human rights and these were hard things.

RESTON: They were indeed.

Q: He took them on I think in a way suffered from them because they build up a lot of enemies, but I mean in a way kind of well he changed the whole focus of things the same way let's say that Margaret Thatcher did in England by breaking the power of the absolute power of the unions. These things were important.

RESTON: Yes they were. I'm very proud of my service in the Carter Administration. I think, I mean it was a spotty administration for many reasons, and I guess in some ways, ultimately an unsuccessful one, but its efforts in foreign policy really were quite significant, I think. You mentioned many of them, but also the shift in Africa, the clear signaling that we insisted on change in Southern Africa and we would not rescue the apartheid regime if push came to shove. Extremely important was the effort to bring the arms race under control. While it may not have been resulted in ratified treaties, I think the treaties that we did negotiate were respected, in fact. It began the process of reeling that back. There were a lot of significant things done by the Carter Administration and I was proud to be part of it.

Q: Well, I want to thank you.

RESTON: No, I want to thank you. I've enjoyed this. I hope I've been helpful.

End of interview